# AN EXPOSITION Of THE APOSTLE PAUL TO THE EPHESIANS

**JOHN GILL D.D.**

Carefully Revised and Presented
in Modern Readable English
while preserving the theological terminology,
doctrines of grace, and substance
of the original exposition.

**Edited by**
**DAVID CLARKE**

# AN EXPOSITION Of THE APOSTLE PAUL TO THE EPHESIANS

JOHN GILL D.D.

Carefully Revised and Presented
in Modern Readable English
while preserving the theological terminology,
doctrines of grace, and substance
of the original exposition.

Edited by
DAVID CLARKE

Published by Bierton Particular Baptists
11 Hayling Close
Fareham
Hampshire
PO143AE

ISBN 978-1-4461-0237-4

2026

www.BiertonParticularBaptists.co.uk

## INTRODUCTION

This commentary on Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians has been prepared with the desire of making the rich doctrinal truths and practical instruction of this epistle more accessible unto modern readers while preserving the reverent theological language and substance of the original work.

The Epistle to the Ephesians stands among the most profound portions of Holy Scripture, setting forth the eternal purpose of God in Christ, the sovereign grace of salvation, the unity of the church, the believer's walk before God, and the spiritual warfare of the Christian life. Throughout this commentary great care has been taken to preserve the doctrinal precision, scriptural emphasis, and devotional spirit characteristic of historic Reformed theology.

The editor has sought to present the material in clear and readable English while retaining the dignity, depth, and theological richness of the original exposition. Scripture quotations have been preserved in the language of the Authorised King James Version, and theological expressions have been carefully maintained wherever possible.

This edition has not been prepared as a replacement for the original works of the great commentators of the past, but rather as a labour intended to assist readers, students, ministers, and churches in the careful study of the Word of God.

It is the sincere prayer of the editor that this volume may encourage deeper reverence for the Holy Scriptures, greater love unto the Lord Jesus Christ, and a fuller understanding of the glorious doctrines of grace revealed in this epistle.

David Clarke
Editor

## Contents


INTRODUCTION 7

TO THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS 7

CHAPTER ONE 9

GREETING, ELECTION, AND SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS IN CHRIST 9

INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER TWO 29

OF GRACE, REDEMPTION, AND THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH 29

CHAPTER TWO 33

INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER THREE 55

OF THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST AND THE CHURCH 55

CHAPTER THREE 56

INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER FOUR 75

OF THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH AND THE CHRISTIAN WALK 75

INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER FIVE 113

OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE, HOLINESS, AND MARRIAGE 113

INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER SIX 151

OF CHRISTIAN DUTIES AND THE WHOLE ARMOUR OF GOD 151

CHAPTER SIX 154

FURTHER PUBLICTIONS. 175

A BODY OF DOCTRINAL DIVINITY BOOK 1 175

A BODY OF DOCTRINAL DIVINITY II, II,IV 177

A BODY OF DOCTRINAL DIVINITY, V, VI 179

A BODY OF PRACTICAL DIVINITY , III, IV, V 183

THE CAUSE OF GOD AND TRUTH, PART 1,II, III,IV 184

## PRESENTAION AND DEDICATION

Presented to Christ Cantred Churches of the Philippines

Brief history of the Philippine mission

Pastor William O. Poloc Sr. was released from New Bilibid Prison in August 2002, having completed theological studies during his imprisonment. Following his release, he returned to Baguio City together with his wife Beth, where prison ministry work began with assistance from

David Clarke, founder of Trojan Horse International (TULIP) Inc.

In December 2002, baptisms were conducted among inmates in Baguio City Jail and Benguet Provincial Jail, together with several others who professed faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

After David Clarke returned to the United Kingdom in 2003, the work in the Philippines continued to develop. A burden arose to establish a church within the city in order to reach families, relatives, local communities, and former inmates still imprisoned at New Bilibid Prison.

By the grace of God, Christ-Centered Church Ministries was established and gradually expanded throughout the Philippines.

Over time, churches were planted, Bible training developed, prison ministries expanded, and students were trained for Christian ministry. The work eventually included Christ-Centered Churches, theological training ministries, prison ministries, radio ministry, and missionary outreach throughout the archipelago.

To God alone be the glory.

## INTRODUCTION

### TO THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS

The city of Ephesus was one of the most celebrated cities of Asia Minor. Pliny the Elder called it "the other light of Asia," Miletus being one, and Ephesus the other. It was the metropolis of the lesser Asia, one of the twelve cities of Ionia, and chief among them all. According unto ancient tradition, it was said to have been built by the Amazons. It was especially renowned for the magnificent temple of Diana, one of the wonders of the ancient world.

The inhabitants of Ephesus were greatly devoted unto superstition and idolatry. They were also much given unto curious and unlawful arts, as appears from the account recorded in the Acts of the Apostles:

> *"Many of them also which used curious arts brought their books together, and burned them before all men." (Acts 19:19)*

The city abounded with orators, philosophers, and men esteemed wise and learned according unto the wisdom of this world. Formerly it was exceedingly rich, prosperous, and flourishing through trade and commerce; but in later times it declined into poverty and desolation, becoming little more than a village. It still retained something of its ancient name, being called Efeso, though the Turks named it Aia Salik.

Unto this city the Apostle Paul first came after leaving Corinth, though at that time he remained only for a short season. Returning later, he found twelve disciples there and became the instrument, through the blessing of God, of gathering many more unto the faith of Christ. He remained in Ephesus for approximately two or three years and was used of God in establishing a large and flourishing Gospel church.

Unto this church the apostle addressed the present epistle.
The epistle itself was written while Paul was a prisoner at Rome, as appears plainly from several passages:

> *"For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles." (Ephesians 3:1)*

Again:

> *"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord." (Ephesians 4:1)*

And likewise:

> *"for which I am an ambassador in bonds." (Ephesians 6:20)*

It appears also to have been written about the same period as the epistles unto the Philippians, the Colossians, and Philemon. Some have supposed it was written about the year 58, while others place it in the year 59, during the fifth year of the reign of Nero.

The occasion of this epistle seems to have arisen from the apostle's foresight, through the Spirit of God, that false teachers would arise within this church after his departure and would endeavour to corrupt the doctrine of the Gospel and draw disciples after themselves.

Thus in Acts he warned the Ephesian elders:

> *"For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock." (Acts 20:29)*

The principal design of this epistle, therefore, is to establish believers firmly in the truths of the Gospel so that they might not be carried away by error and false doctrine.

The subject matter of the epistle is among the most sublime and glorious contained in the whole of Scripture. It treats extensively of the doctrines of sovereign grace, divine predestination, eternal election, redemption through Christ, peace and pardon through His blood, conversion by efficacious grace, and salvation by the free favour of God in opposition unto the works of men.

It likewise sets forth at large the nature and usefulness of the Gospel ministry, the gifts bestowed for its exercise, and the various duties incumbent upon Christians in every relation of life.

The order and method employed by the apostle are especially beautiful and instructive. He first lays down the doctrines of grace with great clearness and fulness, and afterwards proceeds unto the practical duties arising from those doctrines, applying them unto believers both as Christians and as members of human society.

## CHAPTER ONE

### GREETING, ELECTION, AND SPIRITUAL BLESSINGS IN CHRIST



In this first chapter are contained the inscription of the epistle, the apostolic salutation, thanksgiving unto God for spiritual blessings bestowed in Christ, and fervent prayer on behalf of the saints at Ephesus.

The apostle first introduces himself as the author of the epistle, declaring both his office and the divine authority by which he had received it. He then describes those unto whom he writes according unto their spiritual character and place of abode.

The salutation follows in the usual apostolic form:

> *"Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ." (Ephesians 1:2)*

Thereafter the apostle enters immediately into thanksgiving and praise unto God:

> *"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ." (Ephesians 1:3)*

From this point he proceeds to open one of the fullest and most glorious statements concerning the doctrines of grace found anywhere in Holy Scripture.

He begins with the doctrine of election, representing it as an eternal act of God the Father concerning particular persons chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world.

The end of this election is declared to be holiness and love:

> *"That we should be holy and without blame before him in love." (Ephesians 1:4)*

This doctrine is then further illustrated under the name of predestination, whereby believers are appointed unto the adoption of children through Jesus Christ according unto the good pleasure of the divine will.

The ultimate design of all is declared to be:

*"the praise of the glory of his grace." (Ephesians 1:6)*

Acceptance with God is shown to be wholly in Christ, the Beloved One, and redemption is revealed as being obtained solely through His blood.

Thus the apostle declares:

*"In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace." (Ephesians 1:7)*

The whole plan of salvation is presented as the fruit of divine wisdom and prudence, being the revelation of the mystery of God's will formerly hidden but now made manifest in the Gospel dispensation.

In the fulness of times all things are gathered together in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth.

Believers are further described as having obtained an inheritance according unto the eternal purpose of God:

*"being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will." (Ephesians 1:11)*

The apostle also speaks of the sealing of believers by the Holy Spirit of promise after they had heard and believed the Gospel.

This sealing of the Spirit is declared to be the earnest and pledge of the heavenly inheritance until the final redemption of God's purchased possession.

Having spoken of these glorious doctrines of grace, the apostle gives thanks unto God for the faith and love manifested among the Ephesian believers.

He continually remembered them in prayer, desiring that God would grant unto them greater spiritual understanding and clearer knowledge of Christ.

Thus he prays that:

*"the eyes of your understanding being enlightened." (Ephesians 1:18)*

they might know the hope of their calling, the riches of the glory of God's inheritance in the saints, and the exceeding greatness of His power toward believers.

This mighty power is illustrated by the resurrection and exaltation of Christ Himself.

God raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His own right hand in heavenly places, far above all principality, power, might, and dominion.

All things are placed under His feet, and He is appointed Head over all things unto the church:

*"Which is his body, the fulness of him that filleth all in all."*
*(Ephesians 1:23)*

Thus the chapter concludes with a most glorious display of the exaltation of Christ and His supreme authority over all things for the good of His church.

## EPHESIANS 1:1

*"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God."*

The writer of this epistle is the Apostle Paul, who was called unto the apostleship not by men, nor through human authority, but directly by the will and appointment of God. His office, authority, and ministry rested entirely upon divine commission, and not upon any earthly institution or ecclesiastical appointment.

The apostle addresses his letter:

*"To the saints which are at Ephesus."*

The believers at Ephesus are described by their spiritual character as:

*"saints."*

This title does not signify persons free from all sin, but those who have been set apart by God unto Himself. They were chosen by the Father in eternal election, redeemed by the blood and sacrifice of Christ, sanctified by the Holy Spirit, and called unto a life of holiness and devotion unto God.

The church at Ephesus consisted of such persons as had been separated from the world by divine grace and were distinguished by a holy profession and manner of life.

The apostle further describes them as:

*"the faithful in Christ Jesus."*

These were persons who not only professed faith in Christ but genuinely possessed it. They were united unto Christ by faith, abiding in Him as branches in the vine, continuing steadfast in His truth, and persevering in holiness and obedience.

Their faith was sincere and living, resting wholly upon Christ for righteousness, salvation, and eternal life. They trusted in Him with their whole hearts and openly confessed His name before men.

Such believers formed the church at Ephesus unto whom this epistle was written.

❦

## EPHESIANS 1:2

"Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ."

This is the apostle's customary apostolic salutation, containing both a blessing and a prayer.

By:

*"grace"*

is meant the free favour of God, together with all those spiritual blessings which flow from His sovereign mercy. Grace is the fountain from which every blessing of salvation proceeds, including election, redemption, justification, adoption, sanctification, and eternal glory.

By:

*"peace"*

is intended that peace which Christ has made through the blood of His cross, peace with God, peace of conscience, and that inward tranquillity enjoyed by believers through faith in Him.

These blessings proceed equally from:

*"God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ."*

This expression not only teaches the unity of the Father and the Son in the work of salvation, but also demonstrates the divine dignity and equality of Christ with the Father, since blessings which can only come from God are here ascribed equally unto both.

❦

EPHESIANS 1:3

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The apostle begins the doctrinal portion of the epistle with a hymn of praise and thanksgiving.

God is called:

*"the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

As Mediator and man, Christ acknowledges the Father as His God. The Father appointed Him unto the office of Mediator, entered into covenant

with Him, prepared a human nature for Him, sustained Him in His sufferings, and glorified Him after His work was finished.

Yet as the eternal Son of God, Christ is of the same divine nature as the Father and is His only-begotten Son.

The apostle blesses God, not by conferring any blessing upon Him, for God is infinitely blessed in Himself, but by ascribing unto Him all praise, honour, glory, and thanksgiving.

The reason for this praise is:

*"who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."*

God alone is the Author and Giver of every spiritual blessing.

The persons intended by:

"us"

are not all mankind indiscriminately, but those saints and faithful believers already mentioned, whether Jew or Gentile, who belong unto the election of grace.

The blessings bestowed upon them are:

*"spiritual blessings."*

These are distinguished from temporal mercies and include all the blessings of salvation found in Christ. They comprise election, adoption, redemption, justification, forgiveness of sins, sanctification, perseverance, and eternal life.

These blessings are called:

*"heavenly"*

because they originate in heaven, are secured in heaven, lead unto heaven, and prepare believers for the enjoyment of heaven.

They are bestowed:

*"in Christ."*

Christ is the covenant Head and Representative of His people. All spiritual blessings were entrusted unto Him on behalf of His church and are communicated unto believers through their union with Him.

Thus Christ Himself is both the channel through which these blessings flow and the sum and substance of them all.

## EPHESIANS 1:4

*"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world."*

The apostle now proceeds unto the first and foundational blessing of grace, namely divine election.

This election cannot be understood merely of a national privilege, church membership, office, or outward calling, but refers unto God's eternal choice of particular persons unto everlasting salvation.

The Author of this election is God the Father.

The objects of it are certain individuals chosen out of mankind, not because of foreseen faith, holiness, obedience, or perseverance, but entirely according unto God's sovereign grace and good pleasure.

The apostle says:

*"he hath chosen us in him."*

Christ is the elect Head of His people, and all the elect were chosen in Him as their covenant Representative. Their persons, salvation, inheritance, and eternal glory were entrusted unto Him from everlasting.

This election took place:

*"before the foundation of the world."*

It was made before creation itself. Before the world existed, before man was formed, before sin entered, God had already determined to save His people in Christ.

The purpose of this election was:

*"that we should be holy and without blame before him in love."*

Holiness is not the cause of election but its fruit and effect.

God did not choose His people because they were holy, but chose them that they might become holy through the work of His Spirit.

Ultimately they shall stand before Him perfectly holy, entirely freed from every stain of sin, clothed in the righteousness of Christ, and accepted in His sight forever.

All this proceeds from the everlasting love of God, which is both the source and the motive of election itself.

❦

## EPHESIANS 1:5

*"Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself."*

Predestination here refers unto God's eternal purpose concerning those whom He has chosen in Christ.

The blessing particularly in view is:

*"the adoption of children."*

Adoption is that gracious act whereby God receives sinners into His family and grants them the rights, privileges, and inheritance belonging unto His sons and daughters.

This adoption is entirely of grace. Those adopted possess no natural claim upon the inheritance, nor any worthiness in themselves.

Yet God, according unto His sovereign mercy, has determined that His people shall be His children and heirs forever.

This adoption comes:

*"by Jesus Christ."*

It is through Christ's mediation, redemption, and righteousness that believers receive both the privilege and the inheritance of sonship.

The apostle further declares that this predestination was:

*"according to the good pleasure of his will."*

Thus the ultimate reason for election and adoption is found not in man but in God alone.

The source of these blessings is the sovereign and gracious will of God, who acts according unto His own wisdom and pleasure.

## EPHESIANS 1:6

*"To the praise of the glory of his grace."*

The grand design of God in predestination and adoption is the manifestation and praise of His glorious grace.

The grace of God shines brightly in the salvation of sinners. That God should choose rebels, redeem the guilty, adopt enemies, and make them heirs of glory reveals the riches and splendour of His mercy.

The proper response of believers is therefore thanksgiving, worship, admiration, and praise.

The apostle adds:

*"wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved."*

The:

*"Beloved"*

is the Lord Jesus Christ, who is eternally loved by the Father and infinitely precious in His sight.

Believers are:

*"accepted"*

in Him.

Their acceptance before God rests not upon their own righteousness, works, holiness, or obedience, but entirely upon Christ.

God views His people in Christ, delights in them through Christ, and receives them solely because they are united unto His beloved Son.

This acceptance is one of the most remarkable displays of divine grace, for sinners who deserved condemnation are received into the favour of God through the righteousness and mediation of Jesus Christ.

## EPHESIANS 1:7

*"In whom we have redemption through his blood."*

The apostle now proceeds from the eternal purpose of God unto the accomplishment of salvation through Jesus Christ.

The blessing here spoken of is:

*"redemption."*

Redemption supposes bondage, captivity, and misery. By nature God's elect are held in bondage under sin, under the power of Satan, and under the curse and condemnation of the law.

From this state Christ has redeemed His people. He has delivered them from the guilt of sin, the dominion of Satan, the curse of the law, and every enemy that stood against their salvation.

This redemption is found:

*"in him."*

Christ is both the Author and the substance of redemption. From eternity He was appointed to be the Redeemer of His people, and in the

fulness of time He came into the world to accomplish that work by His obedience, sufferings, and death.

The apostle further declares that this redemption comes:

*"through his blood."*

The blood of Christ was freely shed upon the cross as the ransom price of His people. Being the blood of One who is both truly God and truly man, it possesses infinite value and sufficiency for the complete redemption of all for whom it was offered.

The apostle then mentions one of the chief blessings flowing from redemption:

*"the forgiveness of sins."*

This includes the pardon of all sin, whether original or actual, past, present, or future.

The forgiveness enjoyed by believers rests entirely upon the blood and sacrifice of Christ and is bestowed:

*"according to the riches of his grace."*

Though redemption cost Christ His sufferings and death, it comes freely unto sinners through the abundant grace and mercy of God.

❦

## EPHESIANS 1:8

*"Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence."*

The grace displayed in redemption and forgiveness is not given sparingly but abundantly.

God has caused His grace to overflow toward His people, not merely providing salvation, but doing so in a manner that displays His infinite wisdom.

The:

*"wisdom and prudence"*

spoken of here may be viewed as the wisdom of God manifested in the entire plan of redemption.

Divine wisdom appears in appointing Christ as Mediator, in providing a way whereby mercy and justice meet together, in saving sinners while

maintaining the honour of God's holiness, and in securing salvation in such a manner that all glory belongs unto God alone.

It is likewise seen in the application of salvation unto the hearts of believers, whereby those once foolish and blind are made wise unto salvation through the illumination of the Holy Spirit.

Thus redemption reveals not only the grace of God but also the perfection of His wisdom.

❦

## EPHESIANS 1:9

*"Having made known unto us the mystery of his will."*

The Gospel is here called:

*"the mystery of his will."*

It is a mystery because it could never have been discovered by human reason apart from divine revelation.

The doctrines of the Gospel, including the Trinity, the incarnation of Christ, redemption through His blood, the calling of the Gentiles, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal salvation by grace, are truths hidden from the wisdom of this world and revealed only by God.

The apostle declares that God has:

*"made known"*

this mystery unto His people.

The Gospel is revealed through the preaching of the Word and through the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit.

This revelation is:

*"according to his good pleasure."*

The time, manner, and extent of this revelation depend entirely upon the sovereign will of God.

He sends the Gospel where He pleases, blesses it unto whom He pleases, and reveals its truths according to His eternal purpose and good pleasure.

❦

## EPHESIANS 1:10

"That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ."

The:

*"fulness of times"*

refers unto that season appointed by God when His eternal purpose concerning redemption should be openly manifested through Christ.

At the proper and appointed time God sent forth His Son and established the Gospel dispensation.

The purpose of this divine administration was:

*"to gather together in one all things in Christ."*

Sin brought division, disorder, and alienation into God's creation. Men became separated from God, from one another, and from the holy angels.

But through Christ God restores unity among all His redeemed creation.

The apostle speaks of:

*"both which are in heaven, and which are on earth."*

By those in heaven are chiefly intended the holy angels, who have remained steadfast in obedience unto God.

By those upon earth are intended God's elect people redeemed through Christ.

Through the work of redemption there is perfect harmony between elect angels and redeemed men, all being united under one Head, even Jesus Christ.

Thus Christ stands as the glorious Head of His church and of the entire redeemed family of God.



## EPHESIANS 1:11

*"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance."*

The inheritance here spoken of is the heavenly and eternal inheritance prepared for the people of God.

This inheritance is secured in Christ and belongs unto all those who are united unto Him by grace.

It is incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading. Christ Himself has obtained it for His people and preserves it for them until the day of full possession.

The apostle further says:

*"being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh*

*all things after the counsel of his own will."*

The certainty of this inheritance rests upon God's eternal decree.

The same God who predestinated His people unto salvation also predestinated them unto the inheritance of eternal glory.

His purpose cannot fail because He:

*"worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."*

Nothing occurs apart from His sovereign government. His purposes are never frustrated, His counsel never altered, and His will never defeated.

Therefore the inheritance reserved for believers is absolutely certain and secure.

❦

## EPHESIANS 1:12

"That we should be to the praise of his glory."

The ultimate purpose of election, redemption, and predestination is the glory of God.

Believers are saved that God's grace, mercy, wisdom, and power might be displayed and praised.

The apostle refers particularly unto those Jewish believers:

*"who first trusted in Christ."*

The promises concerning the Messiah were first given unto Israel, and from among that nation many first believed upon Christ when He was revealed.

Their trust was not placed in their own righteousness, privileges, or works, but entirely in Christ alone for acceptance before God and eternal salvation.

Thus their salvation became a testimony unto the glory of divine grace.

❦

## EPHESIANS 1:13

*"In whom ye also trusted."*

The apostle now turns particularly unto the Gentile believers at Ephesus.

They shared equally with believing Jews in the blessings of salvation through Christ.

Their faith came:

*"after that ye heard the word of truth."*

The Gospel is called:

*"the word of truth"*

because it proceeds from the God of truth, reveals Christ who is the Truth, is inspired by the Spirit of truth, and contains the truth concerning salvation.

It is further described as:

*"the gospel of your salvation."*

The Gospel proclaims salvation through Christ and serves as God's appointed instrument for bringing sinners unto the knowledge and enjoyment of that salvation.

Having heard and believed the Gospel, the apostle declares:

*"ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise."*

This sealing is not baptism, church membership, or any external ordinance.

Rather it is the work of the Holy Spirit assuring believers of their interest in Christ, confirming unto them the promises of God, and bearing witness with their spirits that they are the children of God.

The Spirit is called:

*"the Holy Spirit of promise"*

because He was promised by the Father and the Son and because He commonly seals believers through the application of the promises of Scripture unto their hearts.

This sealing produces not carelessness but greater holiness and devotion unto God.

❦

## EPHESIANS 1:14

*"Which is the earnest of our inheritance."*

The Holy Spirit is not only the seal of believers but also:

*"the earnest of our inheritance."*

An earnest is a pledge, guarantee, or first instalment assuring possession of the full inheritance.

The Spirit dwelling within believers is therefore God's pledge that they shall certainly receive the eternal inheritance reserved for them in heaven.

He is both a foretaste and a guarantee of future glory.

This continues:

*"until the redemption of the purchased possession."*

Though believers have already been redeemed through Christ's blood, there remains a future redemption at the resurrection when their bodies shall be fully delivered from corruption, weakness, mortality, and every effect of sin.

Until that glorious day the Holy Spirit remains within them as the perpetual earnest and guarantee of their final salvation.

Once more the apostle reminds us that all this is:

*"unto the praise of his glory."*

The Father who chose, the Son who redeemed, and the Spirit who seals are each glorified in the salvation of God's people.



## EPHESIANS 1:15

*"Wherefore I also, after I heard of your faith in the Lord Jesus, and love unto all the saints."*

Having spoken of the blessings bestowed upon the Ephesians, the apostle now gives thanks unto God for the evidences of grace seen among them.

Their:

*"faith in the Lord Jesus"*

was genuine and living faith resting entirely upon Christ.

Their:

*"love unto all the saints"*

was equally evident.

This love extended unto all believers without distinction, whether Jew or Gentile, rich or poor, strong or weak.

Faith and love are inseparable graces. Where true faith exists, genuine love toward God's people will also be found.

The report of these graces had become widely known, bringing great

joy and encouragement unto the apostle.



## EPHESIANS 1:16

*"Cease not to give thanks for you, making mention of you in my prayers."*

The apostle continually thanked God for the grace bestowed upon the Ephesian believers.

Their faith and love were not viewed as products of human effort but as gifts of divine grace, and therefore God alone received the praise.

At the same time Paul continually remembered them in prayer.

This reveals both his pastoral affection and his understanding that believers require continual supplies of grace from God.

The apostle's example teaches that thanksgiving and prayer should always accompany one another in the life of the church.



## EPHESIANS 1:17

*"That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him."*

The apostle now records the substance of his prayer.

He addresses God as:

*"the Father of glory,"*

the source of all glory, grace, blessing, and eternal happiness.

Though the Ephesians already possessed saving knowledge, Paul prays that they might increase in it.

The:

*"spirit of wisdom and revelation"*

is the Holy Spirit, who enlightens the understanding, reveals Christ unto the soul, and leads believers into a fuller knowledge of divine truth.

The knowledge desired is not merely intellectual but spiritual, experimental, and saving.

It is a growing knowledge of God and of Christ, producing deeper faith, love, obedience, and communion with Him.

## EPHESIANS 1:18

*"The eyes of your understanding being enlightened."*

The apostle desires that believers may possess greater spiritual illumination.

Though already enlightened by grace, they still needed increasing light and understanding.

He prays:

*"that ye may know what is the hope of his calling."*

This hope rests upon God's effectual calling and includes the full enjoyment of eternal life and glory.

He further prays that they may know:

*"what the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints."*

The inheritance prepared for believers is exceedingly rich and glorious beyond present comprehension.

Though something of it is known by faith, its fulness will only be understood when it is actually possessed in heaven.

## EPHESIANS 1:19

*"And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe."*

The apostle desires that believers may understand the greatness of the divine power exercised in their salvation.

This power is seen in regeneration, conversion, faith, perseverance, and every aspect of the Christian life.

The work of conversion is frequently described in Scripture as a creation, a resurrection, and a new birth because nothing less than almighty power can accomplish it.

The sinner is spiritually dead, unable to save himself, yet by divine power he is made alive unto God.

This power continues throughout the believer's life, sustaining faith, overcoming temptation, preserving grace, and bringing the saints safely unto glory.

## EPHESIANS 1:20

*"Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead."*

The power displayed in the believer's salvation is the very same power manifested in the resurrection of Christ.

The resurrection of Christ was one of the greatest demonstrations of divine power ever displayed.

Christ rose as the Representative and Surety of His people, having fully satisfied divine justice on their behalf.

His resurrection secured their justification and guaranteed their future resurrection unto eternal life.

The apostle further declares:

*"and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places."*

This describes the exaltation and glory bestowed upon Christ following His resurrection.

Seated at the Father's right hand, Christ possesses supreme honour, authority, and dominion.

There He continually intercedes for His people, governs His church, and prepares a place for all who belong unto Him.

## EPHESIANS 1:21

*"Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion."*

Christ's exaltation places Him infinitely above every created authority.

Whether angels, rulers, powers, or dominions, all are subject unto Him.

No creature possesses authority independent of Christ, for all power in heaven and earth has been committed into His hands.

The apostle adds:

"and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come."

This comprehensive statement declares the universal supremacy of Christ.

No title, dignity, authority, or glory possessed by any creature can compare with His.

His kingdom is everlasting, His dominion universal, and His glory eternal.

Thus the chapter concludes by directing believers unto the exalted Christ, seated at the right hand of God, reigning over all things for the good of His church and the glory of His name.

## EPHESIANS 1:22

*"And hath put all things under his feet."*

The apostle continues describing the exaltation and universal dominion of Christ.

These words are taken from Psalm 8 and declare the complete authority bestowed upon Christ by the Father. All things are placed beneath His feet, signifying His absolute rule and supremacy over the whole creation.

Nothing exists outside His government. Angels, men, kingdoms, nations, rulers, powers, and every created thing are subject unto His authority. Though many things presently appear to oppose His kingdom, all are nevertheless under His sovereign control and shall ultimately serve the accomplishment of His purposes.

The apostle further declares:

*"and gave him to be the head over all things to the church."*

The church here intended is not merely a particular congregation or outward society of professing Christians, but the whole body of God's elect redeemed by the blood of Christ.

Christ is:

*"the head"*

of this church.

As the head is united unto the body, governs it, directs it, sustains it, and supplies all its needs, so Christ performs these offices for His people.

This headship is the gift of God unto Christ as Mediator. It is an honour conferred upon Him by the Father and a blessing bestowed upon the church.

The apostle says that Christ is:

*"head over all things to the church."*

This signifies that all His authority and dominion are exercised for the welfare of His people.

He governs all events in providence for their good. He overrules the

actions of men and angels, restrains the powers of darkness, protects His church, supplies all its needs, and causes all things to work together for the accomplishment of His gracious purposes toward them.

Thus the church possesses a glorious comfort in knowing that He who rules all things is also its Redeemer, Shepherd, and Head.

❦

## EPHESIANS 1:23

"*Which is his body.*"

The apostle now describes the church under another beautiful figure. The church is:

*"his body."*

As the natural body consists of many members united together under one head, so the church consists of many believers united unto Christ and unto one another.

Though believers differ in gifts, abilities, positions, and usefulness, they all belong unto the same body and are animated by the same Spirit.

Each member has its appointed place and purpose. None are unnecessary, and none can be dispensed with according to human judgment. God has placed every member in the body according to His own wisdom and sovereign pleasure.

This body belongs unto Christ by the Father's eternal gift, by His purchase through redemption, and by that spiritual union which exists between Christ and His people.

He loves the church as His own body, continually supplying, directing, preserving, and defending it.

The apostle then adds:

*"the fulness of him that filleth all in all."*

This expression sets forth the intimate union existing between Christ and His church.

Not that Christ lacks any perfection in Himself, for as God He possesses infinite and eternal fulness. Nor does He require any addition unto His glory or essential being.

Rather the church is called His fulness because it completes Christ considered as the Mediator and Head of His redeemed people. The whole

body of the elect, gathered from every age and nation, constitutes that mystical body over which He reigns.

This fulness shall be fully manifested when all the elect are gathered in, every member brought unto faith, every saint perfected in holiness, and the whole church presented faultless before the presence of His glory.

The apostle further describes Christ as:

*"him that filleth all in all."*

Christ fills all His people with grace, wisdom, strength, comfort, and spiritual life.

He fills their minds with knowledge of divine truth, their hearts with love, their consciences with peace, and their souls with the fruits of righteousness.

He fills His churches with His gracious presence, His ministers with gifts for service, and His people with every blessing necessary for their salvation.

All spiritual life flows from Him. All grace is communicated by Him. All growth is sustained through Him.

Thus the chapter concludes with a glorious view of the exalted Christ, seated at the right hand of God, ruling over all things, governing His church as its living Head, and filling His people with every spiritual blessing until they are brought unto everlasting glory.

## INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER TWO

### OF GRACE, REDEMPTION, AND THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH

In this second chapter the apostle greatly magnifies the riches of divine grace displayed in the effectual calling and salvation of sinners through Jesus Christ. In order to set forth the glory of this grace more fully, he first describes the miserable condition in which all men lie by nature, both Jews and Gentiles alike, before conversion unto God.

He begins particularly with the Ephesian believers, reminding them that they had once been spiritually dead through trespasses and sins:

> *"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins." (Ephesians 2:1)*

Their former walk and conversation had been according unto the course of this present evil world and under the influence of Satan himself, who is described as:

> *"the prince of the power of the air." (Ephesians 2:2)*

This evil spirit continually works in the hearts of the children of disobedience, leading them captive according unto their sinful lusts and corrupt desires.

Lest the Gentile Ephesians should imagine their condition formerly to have been worse than that of others, the apostle includes himself and the Jewish believers likewise, declaring that before conversion they also had lived according unto the lusts of the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the mind and of corrupt nature:

> *"and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others." (Ephesians 2:3)*

Thus both Jews and Gentiles alike stood guilty before God, deserving His righteous wrath and condemnation.

Unto this dreadful state the apostle opposes the glorious grace of God manifested in salvation. Though believers were once dead in sins, they had now been spiritually quickened and made alive together with Christ. This great change is attributed entirely unto God as the efficient cause, unto His rich mercy and great love as the moving cause, and unto Christ as the meritorious and procuring cause of salvation.

Therefore the apostle declares:

> *"But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved*

*us." (Ephesians 2:4)*

By grace believers are not only quickened, but also raised up together with Christ and made to sit together in heavenly places in Him. The ultimate design of this wondrous salvation is that God might show forth throughout all ages:

*"the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus." (Ephesians 2:7)*

The apostle then resumes the doctrine of salvation by grace:

"For by grace are ye saved through faith." (Ephesians 2:8)

Faith itself is shown not to arise from the power or free will of man, but to be:

*"the gift of God."*

Thus salvation is wholly excluded from the works and boasting of men:

"Not of works, lest any man should boast." (Ephesians 2:9)

Good works therefore cannot be the cause of salvation, whether efficient, moving, or meritorious. Rather they are the fruits and effects of divine grace already wrought within the soul. Believers are:

*"created in Christ Jesus unto good works." (Ephesians 2:10)*

These good works God Himself ordained beforehand that His people should walk in them.

The apostle next returns unto the former condition of the Ephesian believers, especially as Gentiles, in order further to magnify the grace of God toward them. They had formerly been despised by the Jews, strangers unto the covenants of promise, without Christ, without hope, and without God in the world:

*"That at that time ye were without Christ." (Ephesians 2:12)*

Yet now, through the blood of Christ, they who once were far off had been brought near both unto God and unto His people:

*"But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ." (Ephesians 2:13)*

Christ Himself is declared to be their peace. By the blood of His cross He not only reconciled sinners unto God, but also removed the enmity and division formerly existing between believing Jews and Gentiles.

This was accomplished partly through the abolition of the ceremonial

law, which had long stood as a partition wall between them:

*"Having abolished in his flesh the enmity." (Ephesians 2:15)*

It was likewise effected through the preaching of the Gospel of peace unto both Jews and Gentiles alike:

*"And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh." (Ephesians 2:17)*

Through Christ both now enjoy free access unto the Father by one Spirit.

Thus believers are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God. They are built together upon the common foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being:

*"the chief corner stone." (Ephesians 2:20)*

The church, consisting of believing Jews and Gentiles united together in Christ, is compared unto a holy temple:

*"In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord." (Ephesians 2:21)*

In this spiritual temple God Himself dwells by His Holy Spirit among His redeemed people.

HYMN 239

Metre: L.M. (Long Metre) — 8.8.8.8

Tune often used: UPTON (though any suitable Long Metre tune may be used).

1 'Twas with an everlasting love
That God His own elect embraced;
Before He made the worlds above,
Or earth on her foundation placed.

2 That love ordained them to be one
With Christ, their covenant Head;
And gave them, ere the world begun,
To Him who for their sins should bleed.

3 O what a sweet and blessed theme
For sinners saved by grace to trace!
To view the heights and depths supreme
Of everlasting sovereign grace.

4 Then let our souls adore and sing
The praises of redeeming love;
And bless our God, our Priest, our King,
Who reigns enthroned in heaven above.
Author: John Kent

## CHAPTER TWO

## EPHESIANS 2:1

*"And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins."*

The design of the apostle in this and the following verses is to display the exceeding sinfulness of sin, to describe the miserable estate of man by nature, and to magnify the riches of divine grace together with the exceeding greatness of God's power manifested in conversion.
The words:

*"hath he quickened,"*

are not found expressly in the original text at this point, but are supplied from verse five, where they occur more fully and will afterwards be considered. Those persons who are thus quickened together with Christ by the sovereign power and grace of God are first described according unto their former natural and unregenerate condition:

*"who were dead in trespasses and sins."*

This death is not merely to be understood in a legal sense, though all men indeed became liable unto condemnation and death in Adam their federal head and representative. Rather it signifies also a moral and spiritual death arising both from original corruption and from actual transgressions committed in life.

This spiritual death consists chiefly in separation from God — Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. Men by nature are:

"without God in the world,"

and alienated from the life of God. They are likewise without Christ, who alone is the Author and Giver of spiritual life, and are:

*"sensual, having not the Spirit." (Jude 19)*

The image of God within man is fearfully defaced through sin. The understanding is darkened, the will corrupted, and the affections disordered with respect unto spiritual things. Fallen man possesses no ability within himself to perform anything spiritually good or pleasing unto God.

This death further consists in the loss of original righteousness, in spiritual insensibility concerning sin and misery, and in bondage unto sin, Satan, and the world.

Hence it plainly appears that man by nature is unacceptable unto

God, harmful unto his fellow creatures, and utterly incapable of delivering himself from his lost condition.

The Jews themselves frequently described wicked and ignorant men as dead men. Thus they say:

*"There is no death like that of those who transgress the words of the law, who are called dead men."*

And again:

"No man is called a living man, but he who is in the way of truth in this world; but a wicked man who does not walk in the way of truth is called a dead man."

Likewise:

*"Whoever is without wisdom, behold he is as a dead man."*

Thus the apostle's description fully accords both with Scripture and with the acknowledged condition of fallen man by nature.

❦

EPHESIANS 2:2

"Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world."

Sins and trespasses are represented as a broad and destructive path wherein all unconverted sinners continually walk. This path is dark, crooked, and ruinous, leading directly unto destruction and death. Yet fallen men willingly choose it, approve of it, and delight therein.

Walking in this path signifies a continued course of sinning, an obstinate perseverance in evil, a growing progress in iniquity, and pleasure taken in sinful practices.

The apostle's expression:

*"in time past"*

shows that even the elect of God, before conversion, walked in the same sinful way as others. Conversion therefore consists in a gracious turning out of this path of destruction and a change in the whole course of life and conversation.

Before conversion their walk had been:

"according to the course of this world."

By:

*"this world"*

the apostle means the present evil age and the sinful customs, practices,

and spirit prevailing among the men of it. God's elect in their unregenerate state conform unto the world both in conduct and in false religious practices.

Such is the powerful influence of worldly customs upon fallen men that none are effectually delivered from them except through the sovereign grace of God. It is one principal part of redemption by Christ to rescue sinners:

*"from this present evil world." (Galatians 1:4)*

Only the grace of God effectually teaches men to deny worldly lusts and vain conversation, while the continual intercession and preserving power of Christ alone keep believers from being overcome by the evil of the world.

The apostle further declares that they formerly walked:

*"according to the prince of the power of the air."*

This expression does not signify that Satan possesses sovereign control over the physical air in raising storms and tempests, but rather refers unto that multitude of evil spirits whose habitation and operations are represented as being in the air.

Among both Jews and ancient heathen writers it was commonly believed that the air is filled with evil spirits and demons. Over these there is one chief ruler, namely Satan himself, elsewhere called:

"the prince of devils." (Matthew 12:24)

He is here further described as:

*"the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience."*

By this spirit is plainly meant Satan himself, who is an evil and unclean spirit exercising powerful influence over unbelieving men.

The:

*"children of disobedience"*

are those who remain in unbelief and rebellion against God. Satan blinds their minds, hardens their hearts, and leads them captive according unto his will.

Even God's elect, while yet in unbelief, remain greatly under his influence until delivered by effectual grace. In their unregenerate condition they may truly be said to walk after Satan whenever they imitate his spirit, obey his temptations, fulfil his lusts, and yield themselves unto his suggestions.

**EPHESIANS 2:3**

*"Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past."*

The apostle here includes himself together with the other Jewish believers in the same condemnation formerly described of the Gentile Ephesians before conversion. This he does partly to show that he speaks not out of prejudice or ill will toward the Gentiles, and partly to humble the pride of the Jews, who commonly esteemed themselves better than the sinners of the Gentiles.

Thus he declares that both Jews and Gentiles alike, while in an unregenerate state, walked according unto the course of this world and under the influence of Satan. They were all equally guilty before God and alike engaged in a sinful course of life.

Their conversation had been:

*"in the lusts of our flesh."*

By:

*"flesh"*

is meant the corrupt principle of fallen nature inherited through natural generation and opposed unto the Spirit and grace of God. It is called flesh because it chiefly manifests itself through the corrupt inclinations of the body and renders men carnal and earthly minded.

The:

*"lusts"*

of the flesh are those inward corrupt motions continually opposing the law and will of God. These lusts are various and manifold, including fleshly lusts, worldly lusts, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life.

Men are said to live in these lusts when they continually make provision for them, obey them, and order the whole course of their lives according unto their sinful desires.

Hence the apostle adds:

*"fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind."*

This expression demonstrates the universal corruption of human nature. Not only the body and its members are defiled with sin, but likewise the higher faculties of the soul itself — the mind, understanding, will, and affections.

The corruption of sin therefore extends unto the whole man. The

understanding is darkened, the will rebellious, and the affections disordered. Such is the strength and dominion of sin in fallen man apart from the grace of God.

The apostle further declares:

*"and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others."*

This signifies not merely that they were wrathful persons themselves, but chiefly that they stood deserving of the righteous wrath of God revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

They were so:

*"by nature,"*

that is, from their very birth as descendants of fallen Adam. Sin is naturally implanted within mankind, and therefore all men by nature stand exposed unto divine judgment.

Thus both Jews and Gentiles alike are concluded under sin and guilt before God:

"even as others."

❦

**EPHESIANS 2:4**

*"But God, who is rich in mercy."*

Having described the miserable condition of fallen man by nature, the apostle now turns unto the glorious display of divine grace in salvation.

Mercy is an essential perfection of the divine nature. Though God exercises a general mercy toward all men in providence, yet His special mercy is manifested particularly toward His chosen people in Christ Jesus.

God is said to be:

*"rich in mercy"*

because He freely and abundantly dispenses the blessings flowing from it. These mercies appear in the covenant of grace, in the sending of Christ into the world, in redemption through His blood, in regeneration, pardon of sin, preservation in grace, and eternal salvation.

The riches of divine mercy are inexhaustible and everlasting.

The apostle adds:

*"for his great love wherewith he loved us."*

The love of God unto His people is exceedingly great if we consider both the greatness of the One who loves and the unworthiness of those who are loved.

It is God Himself — infinite, eternal, sovereign, and unchangeable — who has set His love upon sinful men. His love is free, eternal, and independent of anything foreseen within the creature.

The objects of this love are fallen sinners, altogether undeserving of divine favour and mercy. Yet God has loved His people personally, particularly, and eternally notwithstanding all their sins and transgressions.

This love existed before their conversion and even while they were:

*"dead in trespasses and sins."*

It is therefore the fountain and spring from which all spiritual blessings proceed.

❦

**EPHESIANS 2:5**

*"Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ."*

The apostle again reminds believers of their former state of spiritual death in order to magnify the sovereign grace of God in making them alive.

This quickening may first be understood of regeneration, whereby a soul spiritually dead in sin is made alive through the power of God. In regeneration a new principle of spiritual life is implanted within the soul.

The regenerate man is now able spiritually to see, feel, hear, and act. He becomes sensible of the burden of sin, perceives his lost condition, beholds the beauty and sufficiency of Christ, and hungers after divine things.

This spiritual life is not derived from man himself, for prior unto this work he remains wholly dead in sins and altogether passive under the operation of divine grace.

The work of quickening belongs unto God alone. It is the effect of the exceeding greatness both of His power and of His love.

Believers are said to be:

*"quickened together with Christ"*

because Christ is both the meritorious and efficient cause of this spiritual life. His resurrection from the dead secures and communicates life unto His people.

Because Christ lives, His people shall live also. Their spiritual life is derived from Him as streams from a fountain.

This quickening may likewise be understood with respect unto justification. Men by nature lie under the sentence of death because of sin. Yet through faith in Christ they are brought unto the enjoyment of justification and peace with God.

When Christ rose from the dead, His people rose representatively in Him as their covenant Head and Surety.

Hence the apostle exclaims:

*"by grace ye are saved."*

Salvation in all its parts and blessings proceeds entirely from the free and sovereign grace of God.

❦

**EPHESIANS 2:6**

"And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

This raising up together with Christ refers principally unto the believer's spiritual resurrection from death in sin unto spiritual life.

Christ Himself is both the Author and the Cause of this resurrection life. His own resurrection is not only the pattern but likewise the foundation and pledge of the resurrection life enjoyed by His people.

It may also include the future bodily resurrection of believers, which is already certain because Christ their Head has risen from the dead as:

*"the firstfruits of them that slept."*

The apostle further declares that believers are:
"made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

Christ has entered heaven as the Forerunner of His people, taking possession of it in their name and preparing everlasting mansions of glory for them.

To sit in heavenly places signifies honour, rest, safety, peace, and everlasting blessedness.

Believers are said already to sit there because of the certainty of their future glorification and because Christ their covenant Head already sits there representing them before the Father.



**EPHESIANS 2:7**

*"That in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace."*

The apostle here declares the great design of God in the salvation of sinners.

God has permitted men to remain for a season in their fallen condition, and afterwards quickens, raises, and glorifies them in Christ, in order that throughout all ages He might display:

*"the exceeding riches of his grace."*

These riches of grace surpass all earthly riches both in value and duration. They are unsearchable, inexhaustible, and eternal.

Though grace has been abundantly bestowed upon multitudes of redeemed sinners, yet its fulness remains undiminished.

The riches of divine grace are especially manifested:

"in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus."

God's kindness appears in appointing Christ as Saviour, sending Him into the world, delivering Him up unto death for sinners, and blessing His people with all spiritual blessings in Him.

The phrase:

*"in the ages to come"*

may signify all succeeding ages throughout the Gospel dispensation, wherein the riches of divine grace continue to be proclaimed through the preaching of the Gospel.

It may likewise point unto the eternal ages of glory to come, wherein redeemed sinners shall forever enjoy the fulness of divine grace and glory through Jesus Christ.

**EPHESIANS 2:8–9**

*"For by grace are ye saved through faith."*

The apostle again affirms that salvation is wholly of grace.

This salvation is not merely a possibility of salvation nor simply a placing of men into a salvable condition. Rather it is a real and effectual salvation accomplished by Christ and applied unto believers by the Holy Spirit.

Those who are thus saved were formerly:

*"children of wrath"*

and guilty sinners before God.

Salvation includes deliverance from sin, Satan, the curse of the law, eternal condemnation, and wrath to come. It likewise includes all the blessings of grace in this life and everlasting glory in the life to come.

All this proceeds entirely from the free favour and sovereign grace of God.

The apostle further teaches that salvation is received:

*"through faith."*

Faith is not the cause of salvation nor anything meritorious in itself. It is simply the appointed means whereby sinners receive Christ and enjoy the blessings of salvation.

Even this faith itself is:

*"not of yourselves: it is the gift of God."*

Faith does not arise from the free will or natural power of man but is bestowed sovereignly through divine grace.

Therefore salvation remains wholly of grace from beginning unto end:

*"Not of works, lest any man should boast."*

No works, whether ceremonial or moral, before or after conversion, can ever procure salvation or contribute unto justification before God.

God has purposely excluded boasting by ordaining salvation entirely by grace through Jesus Christ, so that:

*"He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord."*

**EPHESIANS 2:10**

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works."

The apostle here further confirms that salvation cannot possibly arise from the works of men, since believers themselves, as renewed persons, are entirely the workmanship of God.

This expression refers not merely unto men as creatures, but unto Christians as new creatures in Christ Jesus. The work of grace wrought within the soul is here especially intended. It is a most excellent and curious work of divine wisdom and power, like a beautiful piece of workmanship skillfully formed by the hand of God Himself.

This inward work of grace is not completed all at once, but is gradually carried on until it is perfected by that gracious hand which first began it.

The author of this work is God alone. It is not produced by the power of man, nor by the will of the creature, nor even by ministers or angels, but wholly by divine operation.

Sometimes this work is attributed unto the Holy Spirit, who regenerates and sanctifies the soul. At other times it is ascribed unto the Son of God, who quickens whom He will. Here especially the Father appears to be intended as the Author of this gracious workmanship.

The subjects of this divine operation are those formerly described as:

*"dead in trespasses and sins."*

Thus both Jews and Gentiles alike, though by nature children of wrath even as others, become through sovereign grace the workmanship of God.

The apostle further adds:

*"created in Christ Jesus unto good works."*

Regeneration is therefore described as a new creation. It is not merely the repairing or improving of old principles already existing within fallen man, but the implantation of new spiritual principles altogether through the almighty power of God.

As soon as a man is made a new creature, he is openly manifested to be in Christ Jesus. The new nature implanted within him fits and disposes him unto righteousness and true holiness.

The principle of grace wrought within the heart both inclines and enables believers unto the performance of good works pleasing unto God.

Yet these works are not the cause of salvation, but the fruits and evidences of divine grace already bestowed.

Therefore the apostle declares:

*"which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."*

God has beforehand prepared both the good works themselves and His people for the performance of them. In His Word He has declared what works are pleasing in His sight, and by His grace He enables His people continually to walk in them throughout the whole course of their lives.

Thus good works are not occasional acts merely, but should form the habitual conversation and conduct of believers.

At the same time, this doctrine plainly demonstrates that predestination is not founded upon foreseen good works, since good works themselves are the fruits and effects of God's eternal purpose of grace.

Neither does the doctrine of sovereign grace encourage licentiousness or careless living, for the same God who ordains salvation and glory likewise ordains holiness and obedience in the lives of His people.

❦

**EPHESIANS 2:11**

"Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh."

The apostle now reminds the Ephesian believers of their former miserable condition as Gentiles in order further to magnify the grace of God displayed in their conversion and salvation.

He would have them remember not merely their national identity as Gentiles, but especially their former spiritual condition. They had once lived in ignorance of the true God, strangers unto divine truth, and deeply immersed in the corruptions and idolatries of the heathen world.

They were:

*"Gentiles in the flesh,"*

that is, carnal and unregenerate persons walking after the lusts and desires of fallen nature.

Special reference is likewise made unto their uncircumcised condition, for they were:

*"called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands."*

The Jews commonly regarded uncircumcised Gentiles with contempt and reproach, considering them unclean and separated from the covenant privileges belonging unto Israel.

Yet the apostle intimates that outward circumcision alone possessed no saving virtue, for true circumcision is inward and spiritual:

*"in the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter." (Romans 2:29)*

Such circumcision is wrought not by human hands but by the Spirit and power of God.

❦

**EPHESIANS 2:12**

*"That at that time ye were without Christ."*

The apostle continues describing the former condition of the Gentiles before conversion.

Though they had been chosen in Christ from eternity and redeemed by Him in the purpose of God, yet in their unregenerate state they were without any saving knowledge of Him, without faith in Him, without love unto Him, and without communion with Him.

They were strangers unto the promises concerning the Messiah and ignorant of the way of salvation through Him.

Hence they are further described as:

*"aliens from the commonwealth of Israel."*

They were separated both from the civil privileges and from the visible church state formerly enjoyed by Israel under the Old Testament dispensation.

Likewise they were:

*"strangers from the covenants of promise."*

The covenant promises and ordinances entrusted unto Israel did not belong outwardly unto the Gentile nations.

Therefore they are said to be:

*"having no hope, and without God in the world."*

This does not mean that the Gentiles possessed no natural notions concerning deity, but that they were without the true knowledge of God in Christ, without reconciliation unto Him, without communion with Him, and without any sure and well-grounded hope of eternal life.

To be:

*"without God"*

is the most miserable condition into which fallen man can enter.

Separated from God through sin, ignorant of His grace, and destitute of true hope, the Gentiles walked in darkness and spiritual alienation.

❦

**EPHESIANS 2:13**

*"But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."*

Having set forth their former distance and alienation, the apostle now declares the glorious change brought about through Jesus Christ.

Those who once were:

*"far off"*

had been far removed from God through sin and ignorance. They were strangers unto fellowship with Him, ignorant of His righteousness, destitute of peace, and separated from His people.

This distance arose both from the fall of Adam and from their own actual transgressions.

Yet now through sovereign grace they had been:

*"made nigh by the blood of Christ."*

The blood of Christ removes guilt, procures pardon, establishes peace with God, and opens the way of free access unto the Father.

By virtue of Christ's atoning sacrifice believers draw near unto God with holy boldness and enjoy communion with Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.

The same blood which reconciles sinners unto God likewise unites them unto the true people of God, so that both Jews and Gentiles become one spiritual body in Christ Jesus.

**EPHESIANS 2:14**

*"For he is our peace."*

The apostle now sets forth Christ Himself as the Author and Foundation of all true peace.

There had long existed great enmity between Jews and Gentiles. The Jews despised the Gentiles as unclean and uncircumcised, while the Gentiles in turn held the Jews in contempt. Much of this division centred around the ceremonial law and the ordinance of circumcision.

Yet Christ:

*"is our peace."*

By abolishing the ceremonial law and by preaching the Gospel unto both Jews and Gentiles alike, He has united them together into one spiritual body and one church.

More importantly still, Christ is the Author of peace between God and sinful men. Fallen man is naturally at enmity against God, and no sinner possesses either the power or ability to reconcile himself unto Him.

Christ alone was fitted for this glorious work, being both God and man in one Person. As the Mediator between God and men, He alone could satisfy divine justice and establish an everlasting peace through His sufferings and death.

This peace has been made:

*"by the blood of his cross."*

It rests upon a full satisfaction rendered unto the law and justice of God and therefore remains sure, lasting, and unchangeable.

Christ is likewise the Giver of peace unto His people — peace within the churches, peace of conscience, and everlasting peace in glory.

Thus the apostle adds:

*"who hath made both one."*

Christ has united believing Jews and Gentiles into one body, one church, and one people under Himself as their common Head.

He:

*"hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us."*

This:

*"middle wall"*

signifies the ceremonial law, which separated Jews from Gentiles and maintained hostility between them.

There appears also to be an allusion unto the wall in the temple which divided the court of the Gentiles from that of Israel and kept the Gentiles at a distance in worship.

By removing this partition through His death, Christ has reconciled both peoples together in one spiritual communion.

❦

EPHESIANS 2:15

*"Having abolished in his flesh the enmity."*

The apostle here explains more fully how Christ removed the enmity between Jews and Gentiles.

This enmity chiefly consisted in:

*"the law of commandments contained in ordinances."*

The ceremonial law contained numerous outward rites and ordinances which distinguished Israel from the nations around them and maintained separation between Jew and Gentile.

These ceremonial observances became occasions both of burden and of division. They stirred up the natural enmity of fallen man and maintained hostility between the two peoples.

Yet Christ abolished this enmity:

*"in his flesh,"*

that is, through the sacrifice of His own body upon the cross.

He first fulfilled the law perfectly in His own obedience and then removed its ceremonial obligations through His atoning death.

Thus the ceremonial law has now ceased as a binding ordinance,

for it was weak, burdensome, and temporary, designed only until the coming of Christ.

The apostle further declares that Christ abolished these distinctions:

"for to make in himself of twain one new man, so making peace."

Believing Jews and Gentiles are now united together as:

*"one new man"*

through regeneration and union with Christ.

This union is spiritual, inward, and living. By the grace of God both are made new creatures and baptized by one Spirit into one body.

Christ Himself is the great Cornerstone in whom all believers are united together regardless of nation, condition, or former distinction.

❦

**EPHESIANS 2:16**

*"And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross."*

The apostle here presents another blessed end accomplished through the death of Christ.

Not only were Jews and Gentiles reconciled unto one another, but both alike were reconciled unto God Himself.

God was the offended party against whom sin had been committed, yet in infinite grace He Himself appointed and accomplished the work of reconciliation through His Son.

This reconciliation was effected:

*"by the cross,"*

that is, through the sufferings and sacrificial death of Christ upon the cross.

The phrase:

*"in one body"*

may refer unto the human body of Christ offered as one perfect sacrifice for sin. Through this one sacrifice reconciliation has been fully and effectually accomplished for both Jews and Gentiles.

It may likewise signify the one mystical body of Christ — the

church — into which both are now united.

The death of Christ demonstrates that reconciliation is accomplished through satisfaction rendered unto divine justice. Christ bore the curse of the law and endured the punishment due unto His people.

Thus by His cross He:

*"having slain the enmity thereby."*

The ceremonial law which separated Jew and Gentile has been abolished, while the enmity between God and man has likewise been removed through the atonement accomplished by Christ.

And where reconciliation with God is truly enjoyed, the dominion and hatred of sin begin also to be slain within the heart through regenerating grace.



**EPHESIANS 2:17**

*"And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were nigh."*

This coming of Christ is not chiefly to be understood of His earthly ministry before His death, for during that time He ministered principally unto the Jews.

Rather the apostle refers unto Christ coming spiritually through the ministry of His apostles after His resurrection and ascension into heaven.

Having made peace by the blood of His cross, Christ sent forth His apostles unto all nations with the Gospel of peace.

The Gentiles are described as:

*"afar off,"*

while the Jews are:

*"them that were nigh."*

The Jews possessed outward covenant privileges and the promises concerning the Messiah, whereas the Gentiles long remained strangers unto these blessings.

Yet now the same Gospel of peace is proclaimed unto both alike.

The subject of apostolic preaching was Christ Himself, who is our peace, together with the peace established through His blood

and righteousness.

The Gospel not only declares peace with God but, when effectually applied by the Spirit, also produces peace within the hearts of believers and peace among the people of God.



**EPHESIANS 2:18**

*"For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father."*

Both Jews and Gentiles now enjoy equal freedom of access unto God through Jesus Christ.

This access is:

*"through him,"*

that is, through Christ the Mediator who has reconciled His people unto God by His atoning sacrifice.

Through Christ believers approach God not as an offended Judge but as a reconciled Father.

Christ removes every barrier standing between the sinner and God. He presents the prayers of His people before the Father and secures their acceptance through His own righteousness and intercession.

This access is likewise:

*"by one Spirit."*

The Holy Spirit enables believers to approach God with reverence, liberty, confidence, and filial affection.

As the Spirit of adoption He teaches them to cry:

*"Abba, Father."*

As the Spirit of supplication He assists them in prayer and strengthens faith within the soul.

Thus Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are all revealed in the believer's approach unto God, furnishing a clear testimony unto the doctrine of the Holy Trinity.



**EPHESIANS 2:19**

*"Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners."*

The apostle now declares the blessed privileges belonging unto believing Gentiles through their union with Christ.

Formerly they had been:

*"strangers"*

unto God, unto His covenant, unto His people, and unto the blessings of grace.

But now through Christ they are:

*"fellow citizens with the saints."*

The church of God is compared unto a city strongly established and fortified by divine grace. It is the city wherein God Himself dwells among His people.

Believers possess citizenship within this heavenly commonwealth not by natural birth nor by human merit, but solely through the free grace of God.

The apostle further adds that they are:

*"of the household of God."*

The church is likewise compared unto a family wherein God is the Father, Christ the Firstborn, ministers are stewards, and believers are brethren.

Into this household men enter not by works but through adopting grace.

Those who belong unto this family enjoy rich spiritual privileges. They have liberty of access unto God, partake of the fulness of grace in Christ, are continually cared for by their heavenly Father, and possess an inheritance incorruptible and eternal.



**EPHESIANS 2:20**

*"And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets."*

The church is here compared unto a spiritual building.

The:

*"apostles and prophets"*

are not themselves the ultimate foundation, but rather they ministerially laid and proclaimed the one true foundation, namely Jesus Christ Himself.

Christ alone is the foundation of the covenant of grace, of faith, hope, salvation, peace, and eternal life.

Upon this sure foundation believers are built through the operation of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, while ministers serve as instruments in the work.

By nature all men lie in the same corrupt quarry of fallen humanity, but through effectual grace God separates His people unto Himself and builds them upon Christ by faith.

The apostle further declares:

*"Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone."*

Christ is both the foundation and the chief cornerstone of the whole spiritual building.

As the cornerstone joins and binds together the several parts of a structure, so Christ unites together Jews and Gentiles, Old Testament saints and New Testament saints, believers on earth and saints in glory.

He is the beauty, strength, and stability of the whole church.

All believers in every age and nation meet together in Him and derive all their life, unity, and salvation from Him alone.

**EPHESIANS 2:21**

*"In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord."*

The apostle continues the comparison of the church unto a spiritual building founded upon Jesus Christ.

This building consists of all the saints and people of God throughout every age. It is no earthly structure made with hands, but a spiritual and everlasting habitation prepared by divine grace.

The church is:

*"fitly framed together."*

As in a well-constructed building every stone, beam, and pillar occupies its proper place and contributes unto the strength and beauty of the whole, so likewise the members of Christ's church are wisely ordered and united together by divine wisdom.

Some believers may be compared unto pillars, others unto beams or living stones, yet all are harmoniously joined together and

made serviceable unto the good and edification of the entire body.

This whole spiritual building centres in Christ Himself. He is the Master Builder, the Foundation, and the Chief Cornerstone by whom all the parts are held together in perfect unity.

The apostle further declares that this building:

*"groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord."*

The church continually grows through the calling and conversion of sinners who are added unto it by divine grace. New living stones are continually brought into this spiritual temple through the ministry of the Word and the operation of the Holy Spirit.

Likewise believers themselves grow spiritually in grace, holiness, faith, and communion with Christ their living Head.

The church is called:

*"an holy temple"*

in allusion unto the temple at Jerusalem.

As the ancient temple was constructed of carefully prepared stones and was set apart for the worship and dwelling place of God, so the church is composed of souls prepared by grace and sanctified by the Spirit.

This holiness is both inward and outward — inward through the sanctifying work of the Spirit, and outward through a holy conversation and godly life manifested among believers.

The church is said to be:

*"in the Lord"*

because all its growth, holiness, stability, and spiritual beauty proceed entirely from union with Christ Jesus.

❦

**EPHESIANS 2:22**

*"In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit."*

The apostle now applies the preceding truths particularly unto the Ephesian believers themselves.

Not only the universal church, but every true local church of Christ is a spiritual building compacted together in union with Christ.

God Himself is the Builder. Christ is the Foundation upon which the whole structure rests. True believers are the living materials of which it is composed.

Entrance into this spiritual house is through Christ alone and by faith in Him. Ministers of the Gospel serve within it as stewards and pillars appointed for the edification of the saints.

The members of the church are united together through mutual faith, love, and fellowship in Christ Jesus.

Being thus joined together, they are designed for social worship, mutual edification, and communion in the things of God.

The apostle again says:

*"In whom,"*

showing that this whole building and union exist only in Christ, who is both the Foundation and the Cornerstone in whom all believers meet together.

The great end of this spiritual building is:

*"for an habitation of God through the Spirit."*

God graciously dwells among His people by His Holy Spirit. The church therefore becomes a spiritual house wherein Father, Son, and Holy Ghost manifest their presence and communion unto believers.

This demonstrates both the wonderful condescension and the great love of God toward His church, that He should dwell among sinful men redeemed by grace.

Where God thus dwells, there His people find safety, peace, comfort, and spiritual delight.

It is through the Holy Spirit that the church becomes a fit habitation for the holy God, for the Spirit sanctifies the people of God and continually manifests the divine presence among them.

Thus the chapter concludes with a glorious description of the church united together in Christ, reconciled unto God through His blood, and built into a holy habitation for God Himself through the Spirit.

## INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER THREE

### OF THE MYSTERY OF CHRIST AND THE CHURCH

In this chapter the apostle refers unto his present condition as a prisoner suffering for the sake of the Gospel of Christ. Knowing that his afflictions might discourage believers or be used by others as objections against his ministry, he chiefly labours to establish the divine authority of his apostleship and to encourage the saints unto steadfastness and perseverance.

He therefore speaks of the revelation of divine mysteries entrusted unto him and of the special grace bestowed upon him for the ministry of the Gospel, yet always with great humility and lowliness of mind.

The chapter concludes with earnest prayer on behalf of the saints together with a glorious doxology ascribing praise unto God.

The apostle first declares himself:

*"the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles." (Ephesians 3:1)*

His imprisonment was no evidence against his apostleship, for he had received from Christ Himself a divine commission to preach the Gospel of grace unto the Gentiles.

Accordingly he speaks of:

*"the dispensation of the grace of God" (Ephesians 3:2)*

which had been committed unto him.

The mystery of Christ and especially the calling of the Gentiles into one body with believing Jews had been revealed unto him by divine revelation:

*"How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery." (Ephesians 3:3)*

This mystery, though formerly hidden and only dimly understood in previous ages, was now clearly revealed unto the holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit:

*"that the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body." (Ephesians 3:6)*

The apostle acknowledges with deep humility the grace bestowed upon him in being appointed a minister of such glorious truths:

*"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given." (Ephesians 3:8)*

The Gospel he was sent to preach among the Gentiles contained: "the unsearchable riches of Christ."

These divine truths had long been hidden in the eternal counsel of God but were now revealed in order that even heavenly principalities and powers might behold:

*"the manifold wisdom of God." (Ephesians 3:10)*

Through Christ believers now possess:

*"boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him." (Ephesians 3:12)*

Therefore the apostle exhorts the saints not to faint because of his sufferings, but rather to regard them as an honour endured for the sake of the Gospel:

*"Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you." (Ephesians 3:13)*

He then records his earnest prayer for their perseverance and spiritual growth.

Bowing his knees before:

*"the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," (Ephesians 3:14)*

he prays that they might be strengthened inwardly by the Holy Spirit, that Christ might dwell richly in their hearts by faith, and that they might increasingly comprehend the greatness of the love of Christ.

He especially desires that they might know:

*"the breadth, and length, and depth, and height" (Ephesians 3:18)*

of this divine love which surpasses full human understanding.

Finally the apostle concludes with a glorious ascription of praise unto God, who is able:

*"to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think." (Ephesians 3:20)*

Unto Him therefore belongs eternal glory in the church through Christ Jesus throughout all ages.

CHAPTER THREE

EPHESIANS 3:1

*"For this cause I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles."*

The apostle here refers unto his present condition as a prisoner suffering for the sake of Christ and His Gospel.

He was not a prisoner for any crime or evil conduct deserving punishment among men, but solely because of his faithful preaching of Jesus Christ and the doctrine of salvation by grace.

Therefore he was not ashamed of his bonds, but rather gloried in them as marks of his fidelity unto Christ.

Indeed prisons and afflictions have often been the earthly portion of the faithful servants of God.

The apostle's sufferings greatly confirmed the truth of the doctrines he preached, seeing he was willing not only to proclaim them but also to endure imprisonment and affliction for their sake.

He further adds:

*"for you Gentiles."*

His imprisonment particularly arose through his ministry unto the Gentiles.

The unbelieving Jews bitterly opposed the preaching of the Gospel unto the Gentile nations, especially the doctrine that circumcision and the ceremonial law were no longer binding upon them.

This greatly stirred up Jewish hatred against the apostle, and especially among the Jews of Asia and Ephesus who afterwards accused him at Jerusalem and occasioned his imprisonment.

Thus he truly suffered:

*"for you Gentiles."*

❦

**EPHESIANS 3:2**

"If ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward."

By:

*"the dispensation of the grace of God"*

the apostle chiefly intends the Gospel ministry committed unto him by divine appointment.

He had received authority from God Himself to preach the

Gospel of free grace unto the Gentiles and to act as a steward of the mysteries of God.

This was not for his own private honour or advantage, but for the spiritual good of others, especially the Gentiles and the Ephesian believers.

The Ephesians had long known this ministry through his labour among them during the years he had preached in their city.

Thus the apostle speaks not doubting whether they had heard of his ministry, but rather assuming it fully known unto them.

❦

**EPHESIANS 3:3**

*"How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery."*

The Gospel is often called:

*"a mystery"*

because the great truths contained within it could never have been discovered by human wisdom apart from divine revelation.

These mysteries include the doctrine of the Trinity, the incarnation of Christ, union with Him, justification through His righteousness, redemption by His blood, and salvation wholly by grace.

The apostle did not receive this knowledge from men nor through human instruction:

*"For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ." (Galatians 1:12)*

Thus the mystery of the Gospel was made known unto him spiritually, savingly, and supernaturally through divine revelation.

He adds:

*"as I wrote afore in few words."*

This refers unto the preceding chapters of the epistle wherein he had briefly set forth the great doctrines of grace, including election, redemption, regeneration, and salvation through Christ alone.

❦

**EPHESIANS 3:4**

*"Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ."*

By carefully reading and considering the truths already written, the Ephesian believers might plainly perceive the depth and extent of the apostle's understanding in the things concerning Christ.

The:

*"mystery of Christ"*

includes His glorious Person as God and man in one Mediator, together with His offices, grace, redemption, and the whole doctrine of salvation through Him.

The apostle's knowledge of these truths was not slight or superficial, but rich, extensive, and deeply spiritual.



**EPHESIANS 3:5**

*"Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men."*

The mystery of the Gospel was not entirely unknown in former ages, for from the beginning God gave promises and shadows concerning Christ unto Adam, Abraham, Moses, David, and the prophets.

Yet under the Old Testament dispensation these truths remained comparatively obscure and hidden beneath types, ceremonies, and prophetic figures.

Especially the calling of the Gentiles into one body with believing Jews was not clearly understood in former generations.

Though hints and promises concerning it appeared in the Scriptures, the full manner, extent, and glory of this calling remained largely concealed until the Gospel age.

But now this mystery:

*"is revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit."*

The apostles and New Testament prophets received clearer revelation through the Holy Spirit concerning the calling of the Gentiles and the fulness of redemption in Christ.

The Holy Spirit, who searches the deep things of God, revealed these truths unto them and confirmed them by the success of the Gospel among the Gentiles.

❦

**EPHESIANS 3:6**

*"That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs."*

This is the great mystery especially intended by the apostle — namely, that believing Gentiles should stand upon equal ground of grace and privilege together with believing Jews.

They are:

*"fellowheirs"*

of all the blessings of salvation, eternal life, and the heavenly inheritance reserved for the saints.

Being united unto Christ, they become heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ Himself.

The apostle further declares that they are:

*"of the same body."*

Both Jews and Gentiles now belong unto one church under one common Head, Jesus Christ.

They partake alike of the same Spirit, the same grace, the same righteousness, and the same covenant blessings.

Likewise they are:

*"partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel."*

All the promises of God are secured in Christ Jesus and communicated unto believers through the Gospel.

The Gospel reveals these covenant promises and becomes the appointed means whereby sinners are brought experimentally to enjoy the blessings contained within them.

❦

**EPHESIANS 3:7**

*"Whereof I was made a minister."*

The apostle again speaks of his office as a minister of the Gospel.

He was not appointed unto this work by men, nor through worldly authority, but directly by God Himself.

A true minister of the Gospel is one whom God both calls and equips for the ministry.

Thus the apostle says:

*"according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me."*

This:

*"gift"*

does not refer chiefly unto saving grace in the soul, but unto ministerial gifts and spiritual ability bestowed for preaching and explaining the truths of the Gospel.

Natural talent, education, and human learning alone can never qualify a man for the true ministry of Christ.

The essential qualification is that spiritual gift bestowed sovereignly by God Himself.

The apostle further adds:

*"by the effectual working of his power."*

The power of God is displayed not only in the conversion of sinners but also in fitting weak and sinful men for the ministry of the Gospel.

God strengthens, sustains, and renders His servants effectual in their labours through the continual operation of His grace and power.



**EPHESIANS 3:8**

*"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given."*

The apostle here expresses remarkable humility.

The greatest saints are often the most humble because they possess the clearest view of the holiness of God, the greatness of divine grace, and the sinfulness of their own hearts.

The apostle therefore considers himself:

*"less than the least of all saints."*

This lowliness arose not from pretence but from genuine spiritual self-abasement before God.

Yet unto such an unworthy servant:

*"is this grace given."*

The grace intended is chiefly the privilege and gift of preaching the Gospel among the Gentiles.

And the subject entrusted unto him was:

"the unsearchable riches of Christ."

These riches include all the fulness of grace, mercy, righteousness, redemption, wisdom, and eternal glory treasured up in Christ for His people.

The riches of Christ as God are infinite and incomprehensible. His riches as Mediator consist in all the blessings purchased and secured for His elect.

These riches are:

*"unsearchable"*

because neither men nor angels can fully comprehend their greatness.

Throughout eternity the redeemed shall continually behold fresh displays of the glory and riches of Christ.

Thus the apostle regarded it as extraordinary grace that he should be entrusted with proclaiming such glorious truths unto the Gentiles.

**EPHESIANS 3:9**

*"And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery."*

The apostle further describes the great design of his ministry, namely, to enlighten men concerning the mystery of the Gospel and the gracious fellowship flowing from it.

By:

*"the fellowship of the mystery"*

is chiefly intended the participation and communion believers enjoy through the Gospel. Through it sinners are brought into fellowship with Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, together with a common participation in all the blessings and privileges of grace.

This fellowship belongs equally unto believing Jews and Gentiles alike, who now stand upon the same ground of grace in Christ Jesus.

Men by nature remain in darkness concerning these spiritual truths. The ministry of the Gospel therefore serves as the appointed means whereby sinners are enlightened and brought unto the knowledge of salvation.

Yet though ministers preach and declare these truths outwardly, God alone effectually enlightens the soul inwardly by His Spirit.

The apostle further declares that this mystery:

*"from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God."*

The Gospel originated in the eternal counsel, covenant, and purpose of God Himself. It lay hidden within His divine wisdom from everlasting ages.

Though faint shadows and promises concerning it appeared under the Old Testament, the full glory of the Gospel remained concealed from the world until the appointed time of revelation.

This mystery had especially been hidden from the Gentile nations who long sat in ignorance and darkness.

The apostle then describes God as:

*"he who created all things by Jesus Christ."*

All things were created by the Son of God, not merely as an instrument, but as one equal in power and glory with the Father.

Thus the same Christ through whom the world was created is likewise the Author and Revealer of the Gospel of grace.

EPHESIANS 3:10

"To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God."

By:

*"principalities and powers"*

the apostle refers unto the holy angels in heaven.

These blessed spirits behold with wonder the wisdom and grace of God displayed in the salvation of sinners through Christ Jesus.

The:

*"manifold wisdom of God"*

appears throughout every part of the Gospel scheme.

It is seen in election, whereby sinners are chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world according unto sovereign grace and not human merit.

It is displayed in redemption through the incarnation and sacrifice of Christ, wherein God remains perfectly just while freely pardoning guilty

sinners.

It shines forth in justification, whereby ungodly men are accounted righteous through the righteousness of another.

It is likewise manifested in the pardon of sin, where mercy and justice meet together harmoniously through the blood of Christ.

The wisdom of God is called:

*"manifold"*

because of the variety, depth, and glory displayed throughout all the doctrines and promises of the Gospel.

The holy angels learn more fully concerning this wisdom through the church and through the displays of divine grace among redeemed sinners.

Thus the church becomes, as it were, a theatre wherein heavenly beings behold the wonders of divine wisdom and mercy.



## EPHESIANS 3:11

*"According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

The whole scheme of salvation proceeds according unto the eternal purpose of God.

Nothing concerning redemption arose by chance or accident. The incarnation of Christ, His sufferings, death, resurrection, and the salvation of His people were all determined in the eternal counsel of God before the world began.

Likewise the calling of sinners, the preaching of the Gospel, the conversion of souls, and the revelation of divine mysteries all occur according unto this eternal purpose.

This purpose is eternal because no new thought, will, or determination can arise in God who is unchangeable and infinite in wisdom.

Before the foundation of the world the covenant of grace was established, Christ was appointed as Mediator, and grace and glory were prepared for the elect in Him.

Thus the apostle says:

*"which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."*

Christ Himself stands at the very centre of God's eternal purpose. In

Him all the promises and blessings of grace are secured and accomplished for His people.



## EPHESIANS 3:12

*"In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him."*

Through Jesus Christ believers possess free and gracious access unto God.

Christ is Himself the living way whereby sinners approach unto the Father. Through His mediation and atoning sacrifice every barrier separating God and man has been removed.

Believers therefore come unto:

*"the throne of grace"*

with:

*"boldness."*

This boldness does not signify irreverence, but holy liberty and confidence arising from reconciliation through Christ.

The conscience, being sprinkled from guilt by the blood of Christ, is freed from slavish fear and enabled to approach God with filial confidence.

This access is:

*"by the faith of him,"*

that is, through faith in Christ as Mediator, Redeemer, and Advocate.

Faith beholds the fulness of Christ, trusts in His righteousness and intercession, and thereby enjoys confidence before God.

This access is spiritual rather than local, continual rather than occasional, and belongs peculiarly unto believers united unto Christ.



## EPHESIANS 3:13

*"Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory."*

The apostle knew that his imprisonments and sufferings might discourage the Ephesian believers or become a stumbling block unto them.

Therefore he exhorts them not to faint or lose heart because of his afflictions.

His tribulations arose not from evil conduct but from faithful preaching of the Gospel among the Gentiles.

Far from being a cause of shame, these sufferings were an honour both unto himself and unto those for whose sake he endured them.

The apostle rejoiced in his afflictions because he experienced the sustaining presence of God within them and looked beyond them unto the eternal glory prepared for the saints.

Thus his sufferings became:

*"your glory,"*

either because the Gospel preached unto them was confirmed through his steadfastness under persecution, or because their own perseverance amidst such trials would bring honour unto the cause of Christ.



## EPHESIANS 3:14

*"For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

Having spoken of his concern for their perseverance, the apostle now records his earnest prayer on their behalf.

The posture mentioned:

*"I bow my knees"*

expresses reverence, humility, submission, and earnestness before God.

Though outward posture alone possesses no spiritual value apart from the heart, yet bodily gestures often accompany deep inward affection and reverence in prayer.

The apostle directs his prayer unto:

*"the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

God is the eternal Father of Christ, not by creation or adoption, but by eternal generation.

And through Christ He becomes likewise the gracious Father of all believers.

All spiritual blessings flow from the Father through Christ unto His redeemed people.

## EPHESIANS 3:15

*"Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named."*

The whole family of God consists of all His redeemed people both in heaven and upon earth.

This may include the holy angels together with redeemed men united under Christ as one glorious household, though especially it refers unto the saints themselves.

The church on earth and the church in glory together compose one spiritual family under God as their Father and Christ as their Elder Brother and Head.

Believers receive their name from Christ Himself and are called:

*"Christians"*

after Him.

He governs, nourishes, instructs, protects, and provides for His entire household.

Within this family are believers of different ages and degrees of spiritual maturity — fathers, young men, and little children — yet all alike belong unto the same gracious household of faith.

## EPHESIANS 3:16

*"That he would grant you according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man."*

Here the apostle begins the principal petitions contained within his prayer.

He prays that believers might receive spiritual strength from God according unto:

*"the riches of his glory."*

The supply requested is not measured according unto human weakness but according unto the infinite fulness of divine grace and glory in Christ Jesus.

Believers continually require renewed strength to exercise faith, resist temptation, oppose corruption, endure afflictions, and persevere unto the

end.

This strength is bestowed:

*"by his Spirit."*

The Holy Spirit strengthens believers by directing them unto the fulness of grace in Christ, by applying the promises of the Gospel unto the heart, and by making the ordinances of God effectual unto spiritual growth.

The subject of this strengthening is:

*"the inner man,"*

that is, the renewed soul wherein the principle of spiritual life dwells.

Though bodily weakness may abound outwardly, yet the inward man may be continually strengthened through the gracious operation of the Holy Spirit.

## EPHESIANS 3:17

*"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith."*

This is another earnest petition presented by the apostle on behalf of the Ephesian believers.

The Person whose indwelling is desired is Christ Himself — He who dwells in the highest heavens, in whom all the fulness of the Godhead resides, and in whom are treasured all the riches of grace and glory.

Where Christ truly dwells, no spiritual good can ultimately be lacking. His presence brings safety, comfort, peace, and spiritual life unto the soul.

This indwelling is not merely to be understood of Christ's omnipresence as God, nor simply of His dwelling by His Spirit alone, but of that gracious and personal communion whereby He manifests Himself unto His people.

Christ dwells within believers as a king within his palace to rule and defend them, as the master of a household to provide for them, and as the very life of their souls continually to quicken and sustain them.

This indwelling arises from union with Christ and expresses continual communion with Him.

Where Christ once takes up His residence, He never utterly and finally departs.

The apostle says:

*"in your hearts."*

The heart is the principal seat both of corruption and of grace within

fallen man. Naturally it is defiled by sin and rebellion against God, yet through sovereign grace Christ graciously dwells there by His Spirit.

The means whereby this indwelling is enjoyed is:

*"by faith."*

Faith does not create union with Christ nor cause Him first to dwell within His people, but it is the appointed means whereby believers receive, embrace, enjoy, and maintain communion with Him.

The apostle further adds:

*"that ye being rooted and grounded in love."*

This may signify love unto God and unto one another, which grows and becomes established through increasing discoveries of divine grace.

But more especially it refers unto the love of God toward His people.

The everlasting love of God is the root and foundation of salvation itself. It is eternal, unchangeable, and immovable.

Yet believers do not always enjoy clear manifestations of this love and often require to be more firmly rooted and established in the assurance of it.

Such establishment arises through fuller discoveries of divine grace, deeper communion with Christ, and increasing understanding of the doctrines of the Gospel.

❦

## EPHESIANS 3:18

*"May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height."*

The apostle here expresses his desire that believers might increasingly comprehend the greatness and glory of divine love together with the mysteries of redemption revealed in the Gospel.

This comprehension is not attained in isolation, but:

*"with all saints."*

All the people of God share alike in these spiritual blessings and together grow in the knowledge and enjoyment of divine truth.

The expressions:

*"breadth, and length, and depth, and height"*

are not intended to describe the incomprehensible essence of God

Himself, for finite minds cannot fully search out the infinite God unto perfection.

Rather these dimensions chiefly refer unto the greatness of the love of God in Christ Jesus.

Its:

*"length"*

extends from everlasting unto everlasting.

Its:

*"breadth"*

reaches unto all the elect of God throughout every nation and generation.

Its:

*"depth"*

descends unto sinners in the lowest and most miserable condition.

And its:

*"height"*

raises believers unto heavenly glory and everlasting communion with God.

Thus the love of God surpasses all created measure and remains inexhaustible throughout eternity.

❦

**EPHESIANS 3:19**

*"And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge."*

The love of Christ toward His church and people is altogether wonderful and incomparable.

It is free, sovereign, eternal, and unchangeable.

Its greatness appears in the many glorious acts flowing from it — His undertaking as Surety for His people, His assumption of human nature, His sufferings and death in their stead, His bringing in everlasting righteousness, His continual intercession, and His unceasing care over His redeemed people.

Believers possess some experimental knowledge of this love through faith and communion with Christ.

This knowledge strengthens faith, inflames love unto Him, and produces

cheerful obedience.

Yet even the most advanced saints possess but a small and imperfect apprehension of its fulness.

Thus the apostle says it:

*"passeth knowledge."*

It exceeds not only the understanding of natural men, but even the highest comprehension attainable by believers and holy angels in this present life.

The mysteries connected with Christ's incarnation, humiliation, sufferings, and redeeming grace remain depths which finite minds can never fully exhaust.

The apostle therefore prays that believers might continually increase in the spiritual and experimental knowledge of this wondrous love.

He further adds:

*"that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God."*

This does not signify a participation in the essential perfections of God Himself, nor a comprehension of the divine essence.

Rather it refers unto that fulness of grace, peace, joy, holiness, comfort, and spiritual blessing which believers receive from God through Christ.

In this present life believers are filled according unto their measure with the Spirit, with the knowledge of divine truth, and with the fruits of righteousness.

And hereafter in glory they shall enjoy complete holiness, perfect conformity unto Christ, fulness of joy, and everlasting communion with Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.



## EPHESIANS 3:20

*"Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think."*

The apostle now concludes his prayer with a glorious doxology celebrating the infinite power of God.

God is able to perform whatsoever He wills. His power extends unto all things possible and consistent with His own holy nature and eternal purpose.

He can do:

*"above all that we ask or think."*

The blessings which God has prepared for His people exceed both their prayers and even their highest thoughts and imaginations.

Often believers know not fully what to ask for, nor how to pray as they ought, yet God in infinite wisdom and grace has already prepared far greater mercies than they themselves could conceive.

This furnishes strong encouragement unto prayer and confidence before God.

The apostle further adds:

*"according to the power that worketh in us."*

This power is the mighty operation of the Holy Spirit within believers.

It is the same divine power which quickens dead sinners, strengthens faith, sustains grace, sanctifies the soul, and preserves believers unto everlasting glory.

The work of grace already begun within the saints is itself a continual demonstration of the exceeding greatness of God's power.



## EPHESIANS 3:21

*"Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen."*

With this solemn ascription of praise the apostle concludes both his prayer and the doctrinal portion of this epistle.

All glory belongs unto God because of His infinite perfections and because of all His works of creation, providence, redemption, and grace.

Especially the whole glory of salvation from first unto last must be ascribed entirely unto the free grace of God through Jesus Christ.

The place wherein this glory is chiefly rendered is:

*"the church."*

The church alone truly knows the mysteries and blessings of divine grace and therefore alone can rightly glorify God in Christ.

Believers are not only to glorify God privately as individuals, but publicly and unitedly in the fellowship and worship of the church.

The apostle further says:

*"by Christ Jesus."*

All acceptable worship, praise, and thanksgiving ascend unto God through Christ alone, for He is the only Mediator between God and men.

Every blessing comes through Him, and through Him alone believers possess access unto the Father.

This glory shall continue:

*"throughout all ages, world without end."*

The church of Christ shall never perish. The blessings of divine grace shall endure eternally, and Christ Himself shall reign forevermore.

Therefore throughout endless ages the redeemed shall continually ascribe praise, honour, and glory unto God through Jesus Christ.

*"Amen."*

By this word the apostle expresses both his earnest desire and his assured confidence that these things shall certainly be so.

❦

HYMN 793
THE LOVE OF CHRIST
John Kent
C.M.

1 The love of Christ is rich and free,
Fixed on His own eternally;
Nor earth nor hell can it remove,
Long as He lives His own He'll love.

2 His loving heart engaged to be
Their everlasting Surety;
'Twas love that took their cause in hand,
And love maintains it to the end.

3 Love cannot from its post withdraw,
Nor death, nor hell, nor sin, nor law;
Can turn the Surety's heart away;
He'll love His own to endless day.

4 Which of the objects of His love
Can e'er from His affection move?

Or make His loving heart forget
The souls on which His love was set?

5 This precious love has never change,
Nor will it to eternity;
The heirs of grace His heart shall share,
And all His glorious fulness wear.

## INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER FOUR

### OF THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH AND THE CHRISTIAN WALK

The apostle, having in the three preceding chapters largely treated concerning the doctrines of divine grace, and having explained and established them with great clearness and strength, now proceeds in the following chapters unto practical exhortations respecting the duties of the Christian life.

In this fourth chapter he particularly exhorts believers unto a becoming conversation answerable unto their holy calling, urging especially brotherly concord, spiritual unity, and peace among the saints. He likewise warns against various corruptions and vices, while encouraging those graces and virtues which adorn the Gospel of Christ.

Because the Ephesians had been called with an holy calling, the apostle beseeches them, forasmuch as he himself was:

*"the prisoner of the Lord," (Ephesians 4:1)*

that they would:

*"walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called."*

He directs them unto the spirit and temper becoming such a calling, namely humility, meekness, patience, longsuffering, mutual forbearance, and love; endeavouring carefully to preserve:

*"the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Ephesians 4:3)*

For the strengthening of this exhortation the apostle uses several powerful arguments drawn from the unity existing among believers.

They are all members of one body, namely the church of Christ. They are all quickened and influenced by one and the same Spirit. They are called unto one common hope of eternal glory. They acknowledge one Lord, even Jesus Christ. They possess one precious faith in Him, are baptized with one baptism, and have one God and Father over all, through all, and in them all.

Thus he says:

*"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling." (Ephesians 4:4)*

And again:

*"One Lord, one faith, one baptism." (Ephesians 4:5)*

Though believers are united in these great essentials, yet they possess different gifts bestowed for mutual usefulness and edification.

These gifts are represented as proceeding from Christ Himself, who is both the Author and Giver of them:

*"But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ." (Ephesians 4:7)*

This the apostle confirms by a citation from the Psalms:

*"When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men." (Ephesians 4:8)*

He then explains this passage as referring unto both the humiliation and exaltation of Christ. His descent signifies His coming down from heaven unto the lower parts of the earth in His state of humiliation, while His ascension denotes His exaltation unto heavenly glory.

The design of Christ's ascension was that He might fill all things and enrich His church with spiritual gifts and blessings.

Accordingly the apostle enumerates several ministerial offices bestowed upon the church:

*"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers." (Ephesians 4:11)*

The end and purpose of these offices is the perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, and the edification of the body of Christ.

The Gospel ministry is to continue until all the elect of God are brought unto unity of faith and spiritual maturity in Christ, forming together one complete spiritual body under Him their Head.

Thus believers are not to remain spiritual children, unstable and easily deceived by false doctrine and crafty men lying in wait to deceive.

Rather, speaking:

*"the truth in love," (Ephesians 4:15)*

they are to grow up into Christ in all things.
From Christ the Head all supplies of grace are communicated unto the several members of the body, whereby the whole church increases and is edified in love.

The apostle next reminds these Ephesian believers that, being effectually called out from among the Gentiles, they ought no longer to walk as the rest of the Gentile world walked.

The minds of the unconverted Gentiles were vain, their: understanding darkened, and their hearts blinded through ignorance and hardness. Being

past feeling, they had given themselves over unto all uncleanness and wickedness with greediness.

But the Ephesian believers had:

*"not so learned Christ." (Ephesians 4:20)*

Having heard the Gospel and been taught the truth as it is in Jesus, they were now under obligation to live differently.

Therefore they were to put off:

*"the old man,"*

that corrupt principle of fallen nature full of deceitful lusts, and to be renewed in the spirit of their minds.

They were to put on:

*"the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness." (Ephesians 4:24)*

The apostle then descends unto particular practical exhortations.

They were to avoid lying and speak truth one with another, remembering that they were members one of another in the same spiritual body.

They were permitted to feel righteous indignation against sin, yet were warned against sinful anger and continuing in wrath.

They were likewise cautioned not to give place unto the devil by yielding unto his temptations and suggestions.

Those who formerly stole were exhorted rather to labour honestly with their hands in some lawful calling, both to provide for themselves and to have ability to relieve others in need.

They were also instructed to avoid corrupt and unclean speech, and instead to use words profitable unto edification and ministering grace unto the hearers.

All such exhortations are further enforced by the consideration that sinful words and actions grieve:

*"the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption." (Ephesians 4:30)*

The chapter concludes with a solemn dehortation from bitterness, wrath, anger, clamour, evil speaking, and malice.

In place of these corrupt passions believers are exhorted unto kindness, tenderness of heart, and mutual forgiveness.

The great example set before them is God Himself:

*"even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." (Ephesians 4:32)*



## EPHESIANS 4:1

*"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you, that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called."*

Having established the great doctrines of grace in the preceding chapters, the apostle now proceeds unto practical exhortation and holy conduct becoming those truths.

He introduces this exhortation with the words:

*"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord."*

That is, one who was imprisoned for the sake of Christ and His Gospel. He was not suffering as an evil-doer, nor as one guilty of any civil crime, but as an ambassador of Christ in bonds. The apostle therefore entreats the Ephesian believers, by consideration of his afflictions endured for the Lord's sake, that they would walk carefully and consistently in their Christian profession.

The doctrines of sovereign grace which had been revealed unto them were not designed to promote carelessness or licentiousness, but rather true holiness and practical godliness. Since they had been made partakers of such rich privileges in Christ, they lay under the strongest obligations unto obedience and holy conversation.

The apostle therefore beseeches them:

*"that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called."*

By this calling is not intended any particular worldly station or outward condition of life, but that holy and heavenly calling common unto all true believers.

Neither is it merely an outward call by the preaching of the Gospel, for many are outwardly called who are never inwardly renewed nor savingly converted.

Rather, the apostle speaks of that inward and effectual calling wrought by the Spirit of God through sovereign grace.

By this calling sinners are brought out of darkness into marvellous light, out of bondage into spiritual liberty, out of the world and its sinful company, and into fellowship with Christ and His people.

They are called unto the participation of grace in this present life and unto eternal glory in the world to come.

This calling is powerful, efficacious, and irresistible according unto the purpose of God. It is unchangeable and:

*"without repentance." (Romans 11:29)*

It is a holy calling, a high calling, and a heavenly calling.

To walk worthy of this calling is to live suitably and agreeably unto the grace bestowed.

It is to walk as children of light, to live in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made His people free, to walk by faith upon Him, and to proceed steadily in the ways of God with perseverance unto the end.

Such walking does not imply that good works merit the calling itself, for the calling is wholly of grace and good works are the fruits following after it. Rather, the apostle's meaning is that the believer's conduct ought to correspond with so great a mercy and honour conferred upon him by God.



## EPHESIANS 4:2

*"With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love."*

The apostle next sets forth those graces especially necessary for preserving peace and unity among believers.

He first mentions:

*"lowliness and meekness."*

True humility manifests itself in believers by leading them to entertain low thoughts concerning themselves and charitable thoughts concerning others. It causes them not to envy the gifts and graces bestowed upon fellow believers, but rather to rejoice in them and bless God for every increase of grace seen in others.

Humility likewise disposes believers to receive instruction even from the weakest saints, to submit patiently unto the providential dealings of God, and to acknowledge that all they possess is entirely owing unto divine grace.

Such conduct becomes those who have been effectually called by God, for they were once in a low and miserable condition themselves before

grace visited them. Whatever they now possess spiritually has been freely received.

This humility is agreeable unto the will of God, conformable unto the example of Christ who was:

*"meek and lowly in heart," (Matthew 11:29)*

and consistent with the work of the Holy Spirit, whose fruits include meekness and gentleness.

The apostle then adds:

*"with longsuffering."*

This grace consists in bearing patiently with the infirmities, weaknesses, and provocations of others without quickly becoming angry or revengeful.

Longsuffering restrains the passions from hastily seeking retaliation for injuries or affronts received. It reflects the gracious character of God Himself, who exercises great patience both toward wicked men and toward His own people.

Believers therefore walk suitably unto their calling when they imitate the divine longsuffering shown unto themselves.

The apostle further exhorts them unto:

*"forbearing one another in love."*

This includes overlooking many infirmities in fellow believers, forgiving offences, sympathizing with one another in affliction, and rendering mutual assistance in times of distress.

Love is to be the governing principle and spring of all such conduct.

Yet Christian forbearance must not be confused with sinful indifference. To allow sin upon a brother without faithful and gentle reproof is not true love. Rather, genuine love seeks both the peace and holiness of fellow believers.

❦

## EPHESIANS 4:3

*"Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace."*

The apostle here exhorts believers diligently to preserve that spiritual union which already exists among the saints.

There is a union between God and His people, between Christ and His church, and between believers themselves. The bond of each of these unions

is love. But the particular union intended here is that spiritual communion existing among the saints one with another.

Believers are united under one common Head, even Christ. They are members of one body and ought therefore to be:

*"of one mind." (Philippians 2:2)*

This unity may rightly be called:

*"the unity of the Spirit,"*

because it is a union of hearts and souls in spiritual things, effected by the Holy Spirit Himself, by whom all believers are baptized into one body.

The exhortation:

*"endeavouring to keep"*

supposes that such unity already exists among true believers. It also signifies the great value and importance of preserving it.

This unity greatly promotes the glory of God, the comfort of believers, and the peace and edification of the church.

Yet it is often difficult to maintain because of remaining corruption within believers, the devices of Satan, and the many occasions of offence which arise among men.

Nevertheless Christians are bound diligently to labour for its preservation.

They do this when they continue steadfast in fellowship with one another, refuse to forsake each other upon light occasions, perform offices of Christian love, and seek one another's spiritual welfare.

The apostle further declares that this unity is to be preserved:

*"in the bond of peace."*

Peace among believers serves as a sacred bond knitting hearts together in mutual affection and spiritual communion.

Therefore believers ought carefully to pursue those things which make for peace and mutual edification.

Such conduct is worthy of the calling wherewith they are called, for peace belongs unto the very nature of Christianity itself.

God is:

*"the God of peace." (Hebrews 13:20)*

Christ is:

*"the Prince of Peace." (Isaiah 9:6)*

The Holy Spirit produces peace as one of His blessed fruits, and the Gospel itself is:

*"the gospel of peace." (Ephesians 6:15)*

Thus the saints, being called unto peace, ought earnestly to cultivate and preserve it among themselves.

## EPHESIANS 4:4

*"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling."*

The apostle continues to press the duty of unity among believers by setting before them the various spiritual unities existing within the church of Christ.

He first declares:

*"There is one body."*

By this body is meant the church of Christ, which elsewhere is compared unto a natural body because of the union, order, usefulness, and mutual dependence of its several members.

This body is said to be:

*"one,"*

in opposition unto all divisions and separations among believers.

Jews and Gentiles alike belong unto this one spiritual body, having been reconciled unto God through Christ and baptized into one church by the Holy Spirit.

Likewise the saints already glorified in heaven and the saints still upon earth belong unto the same general assembly and church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven.

Though there are many particular congregations scattered throughout the world, there remains but one universal church under Christ its living Head.

Believers of every age, nation, condition, and circumstance are all one in Christ Jesus.

This unity therefore ought strongly to persuade believers unto mutual love and concord, seeing they are members one of another. As members of

one body they ought not to wound, devour, or contend against each other.

The apostle further adds:

*"and one Spirit."*

This refers principally unto the Holy Spirit of God, who quickens, animates, and governs the whole body of Christ.

There is but one Spirit who convinces of sin, enlightens the, understanding, regenerates the soul, comforts believers, and seals them unto eternal glory.

It is by this one Spirit that all believers are incorporated into the church and enabled to approach unto God through Christ.

Since all believers partake of the same Spirit, they ought diligently to maintain unity and peace among themselves. A contrary spirit grieves the Holy Ghost and is inconsistent with His gracious operations and fruits.
The apostle proceeds:

*"even as ye are called in one hope of your calling."*

The hope unto which believers are called is one and the same for all the saints of God.

The heavenly glory laid up for believers is common unto them all. They are equally loved with everlasting love, chosen in the same covenant Head, redeemed by the same precious blood, justified by the same righteousness, and adopted into the same family of God.

There is but one heavenly inheritance, one kingdom, one crown, and one eternal glory awaiting all the redeemed.

The holiness, joy, and blessed vision of God enjoyed by the saints in heaven shall be shared alike among them all.

Seeing therefore believers are fellow-heirs together of eternal glory, they ought to cultivate sincere affection, peace, and unity among themselves while here below.

## EPHESIANS 4:5

*"One Lord, one faith, one baptism."*

The apostle continues the argument for spiritual unity by directing attention unto the common privileges and profession of all believers.

There is:

*"one Lord,"*

namely the Lord Jesus Christ.

By right of creation He is Lord over all things. By right of redemption He is the sole Lord and Husband of His church and people.

He has purchased them with His own blood and therefore they are no longer their own, but belong wholly unto Him.

As Head of the church, King of saints, and Master of the household of faith, Christ alone possesses supreme authority over His people.

Believers therefore ought not proudly to exalt themselves above one another nor seek dominion over their brethren, but rather dwell together in humble submission unto their one common Lord.

The apostle next mentions:

*"one faith."*

This may be understood both of the grace of faith and of the doctrine believed.

There are indeed various kinds of faith spoken of in Scripture, such as historical faith and temporary faith, yet there is but one true saving faith possessed by all believers.

Though differing in strength and degree, it is alike precious in all the saints. It has the same Author, namely the Spirit of God; the same Object, namely Jesus Christ; and the same blessed end, eternal salvation.

Likewise there is but one doctrine of faith, namely the Gospel of Christ.

The Gospel consists of truths to be believed, reveals Christ as the Object of faith, and calls sinners unto reliance upon Him alone for salvation.

Since believers profess one common faith and embrace one common Gospel, they ought therefore to love one another and maintain unity in the truth.

The apostle further adds:

*"one baptism."*

Under the ceremonial law there were many divers washings and baptisms, but under the Gospel there is but one true baptism properly so called.

This is water baptism instituted by Christ Himself.

It is to be administered in one manner, namely by immersion in water, unto proper subjects, namely believers in Christ, and in the sacred name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

And being rightly administered once, it is not to be repeated.

Thus the apostle sets forth the unity of the church through their common Lord, common faith, and common baptism.

❦

## EPHESIANS 4:6

*"One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all."*

The apostle now ascends unto the highest and greatest ground of unity, namely the unity of God Himself.

There is but:

*"one God."*

This truth is declared both by nature and divine revelation.

There can be but one eternal, infinite, omnipotent, all-sufficient, and independent Being. He alone is truly and properly God in distinction from all idols and false deities imagined by men.

This one God is:

*"the Father of all,"*

that is, the Father of all His chosen people in Christ.

He is the Father of mercies, the Father of spirits, and especially the covenant Father of all believers who are adopted into His family through sovereign grace.

Since all believers stand in the same relation unto God as His children, they ought therefore to love one another as brethren.

The apostle further describes Him as:

*"who is above all."*

This signifies the supreme excellency and majesty of His divine nature and His sovereign dominion over all creatures.

He reigns over all things universally and especially governs His church in wisdom and grace.

It is further added:

*"and through all."*

This may refer unto His providential care and government extending throughout the whole creation, sustaining and ordering all things according

unto His will.

It likewise points unto the manifestation of His glorious perfections throughout the entire work of salvation, wherein His wisdom, grace, mercy, justice, truth, and faithfulness shine forth.

Lastly the apostle declares:

*"and in you all."*

This is not merely God's universal presence whereby He upholds all creatures, but rather His gracious indwelling in believers by His Holy Spirit.

God dwells spiritually within His people, maintaining communion with them and making them temples of His grace.

Such considerations ought greatly to strengthen unity, love, and peace among believers who share one covenant God and Father.

❦

## EPHESIANS 4:7

*"But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ."*

Having spoken of the common unity shared by all believers, the apostle now turns unto the diversity of gifts bestowed within that unity.

Though believers are united in one body, they do not all receive the same measure of grace or gifts.

Unto:

*"every one of us"*

some measure of grace is given freely by Christ.

This may refer both unto saving grace common unto all believers and unto those spiritual gifts especially bestowed for the work of the ministry and the edification of the church.

Whatever grace or gifts believers possess are entirely free and undeserved.

They are not bestowed according unto human merit or worthiness, but:

*"according to the measure of the gift of Christ."*

Christ distributes His gifts sovereignly and wisely unto every member according unto His own good pleasure.

Some receive greater measures, others lesser; yet all are useful and necessary within the body of Christ.

Therefore there is no place for pride, envy, contempt, or division among believers, seeing all alike receive what they possess solely from the grace and bounty of Christ.

The diversity of gifts ought rather to strengthen mutual dependence and unity within the church of God.

## EPHESIANS 4:8

*"Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men."*

The apostle here confirms what he had spoken concerning the gifts bestowed by Christ upon His church by citing the testimony of Scripture from the Psalms.

The words:

*"he saith"*

refer unto God speaking in the Holy Scriptures, particularly in Psalm 68.

The expression:

*"When he ascended up on high,"*

is not to be understood figuratively, nor of Moses ascending Mount Sinai, nor of David triumphing over his enemies, as some Jewish interpreters imagined.

Rather it plainly refers unto the ascension of the Messiah, even the Lord Jesus Christ, into heaven itself.

This ascension was real, visible, and local, taking place from Mount Olivet in the sight of His apostles after His resurrection from the dead.

Christ ascended unto heaven as the great High Priest entering the heavenly sanctuary, there to appear in the presence of God for His people, to make continual intercession for them, and to bestow the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit upon His church.

The apostle further says:

*"he led captivity captive."*

These words describe the glorious triumph of Christ over all His enemies and the enemies of His people.

By His death, resurrection, and ascension He conquered sin, Satan, death, the grave, and all the powers of darkness.

Especially did He triumph over Satan, who formerly held sinners captive at his will.

The allusion is unto the triumphs of victorious conquerors who led their captives publicly in chains as tokens of complete victory.

Thus Christ openly spoiled principalities and powers and triumphed over them.

The apostle next adds:

*"and gave gifts unto men."*

These gifts chiefly refer unto the gifts of the Holy Spirit bestowed upon men for the work of the ministry and the edification of the church.

Christ received these gifts in His human nature after His ascension and pours them forth abundantly upon His people.

He received in order that He might give.

Thus ministers, spiritual gifts, and all abilities useful unto the church proceed from the exalted Christ Himself.



## EPHESIANS 4:9

*"Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?"*

The apostle here explains the meaning of Christ's ascension by showing that it necessarily supposes a previous descent.

No man can properly be said to ascend into heaven except he who first came down from heaven.

Thus the ascension of Christ proves both His divine pre-existence and His voluntary humiliation.

The phrase:

*"the lower parts of the earth"*

has been interpreted in various ways.

Some have imagined it refers unto a supposed place called Limbo, wherein the fathers of the Old Testament were detained until Christ delivered them. But such notions are without foundation in Holy Scripture.

Others understand it of Christ's sufferings under the wrath of God and His entering into the state of the dead.

More properly the words appear to describe the whole state of Christ's

humiliation.

This includes His descent from heavenly glory in taking upon Himself human nature, His incarnation in the womb of the virgin, His life of sorrow and obedience upon earth, His sufferings and death upon the cross, and His burial in the grave.

Thus He descended from the highest glory unto the deepest humiliation for the salvation of His people.

The reference appears especially connected with those Scriptures speaking of man being formed:

*"in the lowest parts of the earth," (Psalm 139:15)*

that is, within the mother's womb.

Christ therefore humbled Himself fully, even unto death, before being exalted unto heavenly glory.



## EPHESIANS 4:10

*"He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things."*

The apostle now declares that the very same divine Person who descended in humiliation is He who afterwards ascended in exaltation.

It was the eternal Son of God who assumed human nature, suffered therein, died, rose again, and ascended into heaven.

Thus Christ remains one Person possessing two distinct natures, divine and human.

His ascension was:

*"far above all heavens,"*

that is, above the visible heavens and into the highest heaven itself, where He now sits exalted at the right hand of God.

This glorious exaltation demonstrates His supreme dignity and honour above all creatures.

The apostle further declares the purpose of this ascension:

*"that he might fill all things."*

This may signify the fulfilling of all things foretold concerning Him in the Scriptures.

By His ascension Christ fulfilled the types and prophecies relating unto

His heavenly priesthood and exaltation.

It also signifies His filling His church with grace, gifts, and spiritual blessings.

From His exalted throne He pours forth the Holy Spirit, governs His kingdom, sustains His people, and communicates all necessary grace unto them.

He fills every believer with spiritual life, peace, comfort, righteousness, and strength.

He likewise fills His churches with officers, gifts, ordinances, and spiritual blessings suitable unto their several needs and conditions.



## EPHESIANS 4:11

*"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers."*

The apostle now enumerates the several offices and gifts bestowed by Christ upon His church.

First he mentions:

*"apostles."*

These were extraordinary officers immediately called and commissioned by Christ Himself.

They received their doctrine directly from Him, were infallibly guided by the Holy Spirit, possessed authority to work miracles for confirmation of the Gospel, and were sent forth to preach everywhere and establish churches.

This office was extraordinary and temporary and has now ceased.

The apostle next mentions:

*"prophets."*

These were likewise extraordinary officers possessing special gifts for interpreting Scripture and foretelling future events.

Such prophets existed in the apostolic churches, as appears in the Acts of the Apostles.

Then follow:

*"evangelists."*

These were travelling preachers and assistants unto the apostles, such

as Timothy, Titus, and others who laboured in spreading the Gospel from place to place.

They were not fixed ministers over one particular congregation.

Lastly the apostle mentions:

*"pastors and teachers."*

These terms most likely describe one ordinary and continuing office within the church under different aspects.

Pastors are shepherds entrusted with the oversight and care of Christ's flock.

Teachers instruct believers in sound doctrine and truth.

The ordinary ministry of the Gospel therefore consists in feeding, guiding, instructing, and caring for the church of God.

From all this it is evident that the ministry of the Gospel is not a human invention but an ordinance appointed by Christ Himself, who alone qualifies men for so great a work by the gifts of His Spirit.

❦

## EPHESIANS 4:12

*"For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."*

The apostle next sets forth the design and purpose for which these ministerial gifts were given.

They are bestowed:

*"for the perfecting of the saints."*

Believers in this present life are imperfect in knowledge, holiness, faith, and comfort.

Though truly sanctified, they continually require further growth and increase in grace.

The ministry of the word serves as an appointed means whereby God carries forward the work of sanctification within His people.

It is also the means by which the elect are gathered visibly into Christ and joined unto His churches.

The apostle further adds:

*"for the work of the ministry."*

The preaching of the Gospel is a labour requiring divine gifts, spiritual

wisdom, faithfulness, and strength from God.

It is a service appointed not for dominion over men's consciences, but for their spiritual benefit and salvation.

Likewise these gifts are bestowed:

*"for the edifying of the body of Christ."*

The church is compared unto a spiritual building continually increasing and strengthened through the ministry of the word.

Believers are thereby instructed, comforted, established, and built up in faith and holiness.

Thus the ministry serves both the increase of the church in number and its growth in spiritual maturity and grace.

## EPHESIANS 4:13

*"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."*

These words describe the continuance and great design of the Gospel ministry.

The ministry of the word is to remain in the church until all the elect of God are gathered in and brought unto unity in the faith of Christ.

By:

*"the unity of the faith"*

is not chiefly intended the union of believers among themselves, though that is precious and desirable, but rather unity in the doctrine of faith and in the grace of faith itself.

The Gospel is one harmonious system of divine truth, and all believers shall ultimately be brought into agreement concerning the great doctrines of salvation.

Likewise all the elect shall be brought unto saving faith in Christ through the preaching of the Gospel.

The apostle further adds:

*"and of the knowledge of the Son of God."*

This knowledge is not merely speculative or historical, but spiritual, experimental, and saving.

It is that gracious knowledge whereby Christ is discerned in His glory,

fulness, offices, and suitability as the only Saviour of sinners.

Such knowledge includes faith, trust, love, and practical acquaintance with Christ.

The saints possess this knowledge imperfectly in the present life, but through the ministry of the Gospel they grow continually therein.

The apostle next says:

*"unto a perfect man."*

This may refer unto the church collectively, which when all the elect are gathered together shall form one complete and perfect spiritual body under Christ the Head.

It may likewise respect individual believers who shall at length arrive unto perfection in holiness and knowledge in the heavenly state.

He further describes this perfection as:

*"the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."*

By this is meant that complete maturity and perfection unto which the whole church shall finally arrive through union with Christ and participation in His grace.

Until that glorious perfection is reached, the Gospel ministry remains necessary and useful within the church of God.

❦

## EPHESIANS 4:14

> *"That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine."*

The apostle now declares one principal end of the Gospel ministry and spiritual growth.

Believers are not always to remain spiritual children weak in understanding, unstable in judgment, and unable to withstand false doctrine.

There are indeed respects in which Christians ought always to resemble little children, particularly in humility, simplicity, tenderness of conscience, and fervent love unto God and His people.

Yet they ought not to remain childish in spiritual understanding and discernment.

The apostle warns against being:

*"tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine."*

False doctrines are fitly compared unto winds because of their emptiness, instability, noise, and destructive force.

False teachers often come with great swelling words and specious appearances, whereby unstable souls are easily deceived.

To be carried about by such doctrines manifests ignorance, weakness, inconstancy, and want of spiritual discernment.

The apostle further attributes these dangers unto:

*"the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness."*

False teachers use subtle arts, deceitful methods, and cunning devices to impose error upon the minds of men.

As gamblers use tricks to cheat others, so false teachers employ craft and deceit to corrupt souls and draw disciples after themselves.

Their methods ultimately proceed from Satan himself, who is the father of lies and the great deceiver of mankind.

Against all such dangers the faithful ministry of the Gospel serves as the church's appointed safeguard and defence.

❦

## EPHESIANS 4:15

*"But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ."*

In opposition unto the deceitful methods of false teachers, the apostle exhorts believers unto sincerity, truth, and love.

By:

*"the truth"*

may chiefly be understood the Gospel itself, called the word of truth because it proceeds from the God of truth, reveals Christ who is the Truth, and contains the true doctrines of grace and salvation.

This truth is to be spoken:

*"in love."*

Ministers are to preach the Gospel sincerely, faithfully, and affectionately, seeking not the ruin but the salvation and edification of souls.

Likewise believers are to speak the truth one unto another from genuine

love and concern for each other's spiritual welfare.

The design of this is:

*"that they may grow up into him in all things."*

The work of grace within the soul is gradual. Believers increase in faith, love, knowledge, humility, patience, and holiness through continual supplies received from Christ.

This growth is:

*"into him,"*

that is, into closer conformity and communion with Christ Himself.

He is:

*"the head,"*

both in dignity and influence.

From Him all grace, strength, wisdom, and spiritual nourishment proceed unto His members.

Thus the preaching and receiving of divine truth is an appointed means whereby believers mature spiritually and increase in conformity unto Christ.



## EPHESIANS 4:16

*"From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth."*

By:

*"the whole body"*

is meant the church of Christ.

This body derives its life, order, union, strength, and increase entirely from Christ its living Head.

The church has its being from Him, depends continually upon Him, and is united unto Him in a near, intimate, and indissoluble union.

The several members of Christ's body are likewise united closely one unto another.

The apostle describes this body as:

*"fitly joined together and compacted."*

This spiritual union is effected by the Holy Spirit, who baptizes all

believers into one body and produces mutual love and fellowship among them.

The means through which Christ communicates supplies unto His church are chiefly the word, ordinances, and ministry appointed by Him.

Every member receives grace and strength suitable unto his proper place and function within the body.

The apostle further adds:

*"according to the effectual working in the measure of every part."*

The Holy Spirit works effectually within every member according unto the measure appointed by Christ.

Thus every believer contributes in some measure unto the welfare, comfort, and edification of the whole church.

The result is that the body:

*"maketh increase of itself unto the edifying of itself in love."*

The church increases both numerically and spiritually through the operation of divine grace.

Love especially serves unto mutual edification, bearing infirmities, promoting peace, and strengthening fellowship among believers.

## EPHESIANS 4:17

*"This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind."*

The apostle now returns unto practical exhortation, solemnly charging the Ephesian believers that their conduct should no longer resemble that of the unconverted Gentile world from which they had been called.

He speaks with apostolic authority, saying:

*"I say therefore, and testify in the Lord."*

That is, he delivers this exhortation in the name and authority of Christ Himself.

The saints are exhorted:

*"that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk."*

Before conversion the people of God walked according unto the course of this world like other men. But having now been effectually called by divine grace, their conversation ought to differ greatly from that of the ungodly.

The apostle describes the unconverted Gentiles as walking:

*"in the vanity of their mind."*

The natural mind of fallen man is empty, vain, unstable, foolish, and corrupt.

It is destitute of the true knowledge of God, of spiritual understanding, and of saving acquaintance with Christ.

Its thoughts, imaginations, pursuits, and desires are vain and earthly.

The Gentiles especially manifested this vanity in their idolatry, false philosophy, curious speculations, and sinful pleasures.

To walk in such vanity signifies a continual course of sinful living according unto the corrupt dictates of fallen nature.

Believers therefore, being renewed by grace, ought no longer to live according unto such vain and carnal principles.



## EPHESIANS 4:18

*"Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart."*

The apostle further describes the miserable spiritual condition of unregenerate men.

Their:

*"understanding"*

is:

*"darkened."*

Not that the natural faculty of reason is destroyed, for men retain understanding in natural and civil matters. Yet in spiritual things they are profoundly ignorant and blind.

They know not God aright, nor themselves, nor the holiness of the divine law, nor the evil of sin, nor the way of salvation through Christ.

This darkness entered through the fall of man and is increased by personal sin and the blinding influence of Satan.

The apostle further declares them to be:

*"alienated from the life of God."*

By this is meant not natural life, but spiritual life, namely the life of grace, holiness, communion with God, and faith in Christ.

Unconverted men are strangers unto this life. They neither possess its principle nor understand its sweetness and excellency.

They are separated from God who is the fountain of spiritual life and are entirely destitute of true holiness.

This alienation arises:

*"through the ignorance that is in them."*

Ignorance of divine things belongs naturally unto fallen men and is itself both sinful and destructive.

Where there is ignorance of God there can be neither true worship, faith, communion, nor obedience.

The apostle lastly traces this condition unto:

*"the blindness of their heart."*

The heart of fallen man is naturally hard, insensible, and opposed unto God.

Sin hardens the heart yet further, and God sometimes gives men over judicially unto hardness because of continued rebellion.

Such hardness produces deeper blindness and alienation from the life of God.

❦

## EPHESIANS 4:19

*"Who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness."*

The apostle continues his description of the dreadful condition of ungodly men.

Being:

*"past feeling,"*

their consciences have become hardened and insensible through continual sin.

They no longer feel shame, guilt, or fear concerning their wickedness, but rather take pleasure in it and openly glory therein.

Some ancient versions render the phrase:

*"despairing,"*

that is, having abandoned all hope of mercy, they become hardened and reckless in sin.

Thus they:

*"have given themselves over unto lasciviousness."*

This signifies a voluntary surrender unto lust and sensuality.

They become willing servants of sinful passions and continue therein without restraint.

The apostle further adds:

*"to work all uncleanness with greediness."*

Such persons pursue every form of impurity with insatiable desire.

Like covetous men never satisfied with gain, so sinners enslaved unto lust continually crave fresh occasions for sin and corruption.

This fearful picture demonstrates the dreadful consequences of man left unto himself apart from the restraining and renewing grace of God.

❦

## EPHESIANS 4:20

*"But ye have not so learned Christ."*

In contrast unto the corrupt walk of the Gentile world, the apostle reminds believers of the transforming effect of truly knowing Christ.

To:

*"learn Christ"*

is far more than merely hearing His name or acquiring speculative knowledge concerning Him.

It is to know Him spiritually and savingly as the eternal Son of God, the only Mediator, the Saviour of sinners, the church's Head and Husband, and the sole source of righteousness and life.

Those who have truly learned Christ receive Him by faith, love Him sincerely, trust wholly in His grace, and submit unto His authority.

Such knowledge is not obtained from nature, philosophy, or human wisdom, but through the Scriptures, the Gospel ministry, and especially the teaching of the Holy Spirit.

Whoever has truly learned Christ cannot continue willingly in the same

course of vanity and corruption as before conversion.

Grace teaches believers:

*"that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly." (Titus 2:12)*



## EPHESIANS 4:21

*"If so be that ye have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus."*

The apostle here assumes the reality of the Ephesian believers' conversion and spiritual instruction.

They had:

*"heard him,"*

not merely outwardly with the ear, but inwardly and spiritually through the effectual teaching of Christ by His Spirit.

Christ is heard whenever the Gospel is preached with divine power unto the soul.

Those who truly hear Him understand His voice, approve of His truth, believe upon Him, and yield obedience unto Him.

The apostle further says:

*"and have been taught by him."*

Though Christ teaches through ministers and ordinances, He Himself remains the great Teacher of His church by the inward operation of the Holy Ghost.

None teaches with such authority, wisdom, tenderness, and efficacy as Christ.

The instruction received from Him is:

*"as the truth is in Jesus."*

All truth concerning salvation is perfectly revealed in Christ.

The Gospel in Him is pure, unmixed, and certain truth, free from the corruptions and inventions of men.

To be taught this truth experimentally is to be transformed thereby in heart and life.

## EPHESIANS 4:22

*"That ye put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts."*

The apostle now describes the practical effects of spiritual renewal.

By:

*"the old man"*

is meant the corrupt principle of fallen nature remaining in man since the fall of Adam.

It is called:

*"old"*

because it belongs unto man's natural state and original corruption.

Believers are exhorted to:

*"put off"*

this old man with respect unto their outward conversation and conduct.

This does not mean the complete removal of corruption from the believer in this life, for indwelling sin still remains.

Rather it signifies refusing obedience unto its lusts and denying its rule and dominion.

The old man is described as:

*"corrupt according to the deceitful lusts."*

Sinful lusts are deceitful because they promise happiness while producing misery, promise liberty while bringing bondage, and promise secrecy while exposing unto shame and judgment.

Therefore believers are continually to mortify corrupt desires and to renounce their former sinful ways of life.

## EPHESIANS 4:23

*"And be renewed in the spirit of your mind."*

The apostle proceeds to describe the inward renovation necessary unto a holy Christian life.

By:

*"the spirit of your mind"*

is meant the inward faculty of the soul, especially the understanding, affections, and disposition of the heart.

Though believers are already regenerated, they continually stand in need of renewed influences of divine grace.

This renewing does not refer unto the first work of conversion only, but unto the ongoing progress of sanctification within the believer.

The mind, being corrupted by sin, requires continual renewal in spiritual light, wisdom, holiness, strength, and heavenly affections.

The Holy Spirit is the author and maintainer of this work.

He revives declining grace, restores spiritual vigour, increases knowledge, strengthens faith, renews joy and comfort, and carries forward the work begun in regeneration.

Thus believers ought earnestly to seek fresh supplies of grace from God and daily renewal by the Spirit within their souls.

Such renewal is as truly the work of divine grace as regeneration itself.

❦

## EPHESIANS 4:24

*"And that ye put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness."*

In opposition unto the old man of corruption, the apostle exhorts believers to:

*"put on the new man."*

By:

*"the new man"*

is meant the new nature or principle of grace wrought within the soul by the Holy Spirit.

It is called:

*"new"*

because it is not native unto fallen man, nor a mere improvement of natural abilities, but an entirely new work created by God within the heart.

Those who possess this new nature have new hearts, new desires, new affections, new principles, and a new course of life.

To:

*"put on"*

the new man signifies living according unto these renewed principles of grace and holiness rather than according unto the corrupt dictates of fallen nature.

The apostle further declares that this new man:

*"after God is created."*

It is a divine creation and therefore cannot arise from human power or free will.

God alone creates anew.

This new creation is formed after the image and likeness of God Himself.

It especially manifests itself:

*"in righteousness and true holiness."*

This holiness is called:

*"true"*

in opposition unto the merely outward, ceremonial, or hypocritical holiness found among men.

The work of grace produces genuine holiness within the soul, leading believers unto righteous conduct, sincere obedience, and conformity unto the will of God.

Thus the new man tends continually unto holiness both inwardly and outwardly in the life and conversation.

❦

## EPHESIANS 4:25

> *"Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbour: for we are members one of another."*

The apostle now descends unto particular practical exhortations suitable unto the Christian life.

He first commands believers to:

*"put away lying."*

A lie consists in speaking falsely with a deliberate intention to deceive.

Lying proceeds from a corrupt heart and is greatly contrary unto the nature of God, who is the God of truth.

It is likewise agreeable unto the character of Satan, who is:

*"a liar, and the father of it." (John 8:44)*

There are many forms of lying, whether spoken for personal advantage, for jesting, for flattery, or for deception.

All falsehood is unbecoming unto the followers of Christ.

Lying destroys trust, injures society, dishonours religion, hardens the conscience, and provokes the displeasure of God.

Therefore believers are exhorted:

*"speak every man truth with his neighbour."*

Truth ought to govern both civil and religious conversation.

Christians should deal honestly, sincerely, and faithfully with one another in all matters.

The apostle adds the reason:

*"for we are members one of another."*

Believers belong unto one spiritual body under Christ their Head.

To deceive one another by falsehood is therefore contrary unto the mutual love, fellowship, and unity proper unto the members of Christ's body.

❦

## EPHESIANS 4:26

*"Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath."*

The apostle here speaks concerning anger, distinguishing between lawful and sinful anger.

There is an anger which is righteous and without sin.

God Himself is angry with the wicked every day. Christ manifested holy indignation against hypocrisy, unbelief, and profanation. Likewise believers may rightly be displeased with sin, false doctrine, immorality, and dishonour done unto God.

Such anger arises from zeal for righteousness and seeks holy ends.

Yet there is also sinful anger, arising from pride, selfishness, malice, impatience, revenge, or personal offence.

Sinful anger quickly exceeds proper bounds and produces sinful words and actions.

Therefore the apostle warns:

*"sin not."*

Even lawful anger must be carefully governed lest corruption mingle with it.

He further adds:

*"let not the sun go down upon your wrath."*

This proverbial expression teaches that anger ought not to be cherished or long retained.

Believers should not carry wrath within their hearts from day unto day, nor nourish resentment within their minds.

Continued anger hardens the spirit, interrupts prayer and communion with God, and gives advantage unto Satan.

God Himself is slow to anger and does not retain His wrath for ever; therefore His people ought likewise to be ready unto reconciliation and forgiveness.

❦

**EPHESIANS 4:27**

*"Neither give place to the devil."*

The apostle here warns believers not to provide opportunity or advantage unto Satan.

This is done whenever sinful lusts are indulged, corrupt passions are nourished, or temptations are willingly entertained.

Especially does sinful anger open the door unto the devil, who delights in stirring up strife, bitterness, division, and malice among the saints.

To:

*"give place"*

unto Satan is to yield carelessly unto his suggestions and to relax spiritual watchfulness and resistance.

Believers therefore ought continually to watch, pray, resist temptation, and guard their hearts against every sinful influence whereby Satan seeks to gain advantage over them.

❦

EPHESIANS 4:28

*"Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good."*

The apostle next addresses those guilty formerly of theft and dishonest

practices.

Stealing includes every unjust taking or withholding of another man's goods, whether openly or secretly.

It likewise extends unto fraud, deceitful dealings, unjust contracts, withholding wages, and every dishonest practice contrary unto justice and charity.

The apostle commands:

*"steal no more."*

Conversion unto Christ requires a real turning away from former sinful practices.

Yet believers are not merely to abstain from evil; they are positively to pursue honest and useful labour.

Therefore the apostle says:

*"rather let him labour, working with his hands the thing which is good."*

Lawful labour and diligence serve as proper remedies against idleness, covetousness, and dishonest gain.

Honest employment is honourable before God and useful both unto oneself and unto society.

The apostle adds the gracious purpose of such labour:

"that he may have to give to him that needeth."

Thus believers labour not merely for personal support, but also that they may exercise charity and relieve those in distress.

## EPHESIANS 4:29

*"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying."*

The apostle next exhorts believers concerning the government of the tongue.

By:

*"corrupt communication"*

is meant speech that is sinful, filthy, unprofitable, injurious, or offensive.

This includes profane language, foolish talking, unclean expressions, angry words, proud speeches, falsehood, slander, and every kind of communication proceeding from a corrupt heart.

Such speech is called:

*"corrupt"*

because it springs from inward corruption and tends further to corrupt both speaker and hearer.

Words possess great influence either for good or evil.

Therefore believers ought carefully to restrain their tongues and watch over their speech.

Men have no lawful liberty to speak whatsoever their corrupt passions suggest.

True religion especially manifests itself in the proper government of the tongue.

The apostle instead exhorts believers to speak:

*"that which is good to the use of edifying."*

Christian speech ought to be profitable, wholesome, gracious, and suited unto the spiritual benefit of others.

Words should instruct, comfort, encourage, strengthen, and build up the hearers in faith and holiness.

The apostle further adds:

*"that it may minister grace unto the hearers."*

Gracious speech becomes an instrument whereby God conveys comfort, instruction, encouragement, and spiritual benefit unto others.

Speech proceeding from a gracious heart is most likely to edify and bless those who hear it.

❦

**EPHESIANS 4:30**

*"And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."*

The apostle now enforces his exhortations by reminding believers of their relation unto the Holy Spirit.

The:

*"holy Spirit of God"*

is the third Person of the blessed Trinity, truly divine, dwelling within believers as Comforter, Sanctifier, and Seal.

Though the Spirit cannot suffer grief properly as men do, yet Scripture speaks after the manner of men in order to show how offensive sin is unto Him.

Believers grieve the Spirit by sinful words, corrupt thoughts, worldly conduct, disobedience, neglect of spiritual duties, unbelief, and disregard of His gracious motions and influences.

Especially do bitterness, anger, lying, and corrupt speech grieve the Holy Spirit, against which the apostle had already warned.

The grieving of the Spirit often appears in the withdrawal of His sensible comforts and influences from the believer's soul.

Darkness, weakness, deadness, loss of comfort, and declining spiritual affections commonly follow such grieving of the Spirit.

The apostle further reminds believers that it is by this same Spirit:

*"ye are sealed unto the day of redemption."*

The sealing of the Spirit signifies His work in assuring believers of their interest in Christ and preserving them unto final salvation.

The:

*"day of redemption"*

may especially refer unto the resurrection and final glorification of the saints, when both soul and body shall be fully delivered from every effect of sin.

Since believers are thus sealed and preserved by the Holy Spirit unto eternal glory, they ought carefully to avoid all things which grieve Him.

❦

## EPHESIANS 4:31

*"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice."*

The apostle concludes this chapter with a solemn exhortation against several sinful passions and behaviours destructive unto Christian peace and fellowship.

First he mentions:

*"bitterness."*

This signifies inward resentment, sourness of spirit, and offended disposition harboured within the heart against others.

Such bitterness, if indulged, soon produces further sins and disturbances.

Next follow:

*"wrath, and anger."*

These denote sinful heat of spirit, violent passions, and revengeful tempers contrary unto Christian meekness and charity.

The apostle also forbids:

*"clamour, and evil speaking."*

By clamour is intended loud contention, brawling, quarrelling, and contentious behaviour.

By evil speaking is meant slander, reproach, railing, and injurious speech against others.

All these sinful passions and expressions are to:

*"be put away."*

Believers are to mortify and renounce them as unbecoming the followers of Christ.

The apostle lastly adds:

*"with all malice."*

Malice is the inward principle of ill-will and desire for another's hurt from which many outward sins proceed.

Such dispositions greatly grieve the Spirit of God and are utterly contrary unto the spirit of the Gospel.

❦

## EPHESIANS 4:32

*"And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."*

Having warned against sinful tempers and conduct, the apostle now exhorts believers unto the contrary Christian graces.

They are to:

*"be ye kind one to another."*

Kindness manifests itself through gentle behaviour, courteous speech, readiness to help, and sincere concern for the welfare of others.

Believers ought to cultivate tenderness, compassion, and affectionate

regard toward one another as members of the same spiritual family.

The apostle further adds:

*"tenderhearted."*

This stands opposed unto hardness, severity, cruelty, and censoriousness.

A tender heart sympathizes with the afflicted, bears patiently with infirmities, and is easily moved unto compassion and mercy.

The apostle especially exhorts believers unto:

*"forgiving one another."*

Whatever offences believers commit against one another ought freely and sincerely to be forgiven.

Such forgiveness must proceed from the heart and not merely outwardly.

Christians are not to cherish resentment nor continually revive former injuries.

The great example and motive for such forgiveness is found in God Himself:

*"even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."*

God freely forgives His people solely through the mediation, righteousness, and atoning sacrifice of Christ.

His forgiveness is full, gracious, and abundant.

Therefore believers, who themselves have received such undeserved mercy, ought readily and cheerfully to forgive one another for Christ's sake.

HYMN 998

CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

John Fawcett

C.M.

1 Blest be the tie that binds
Our hearts in Christian love;
The fellowship of kindred minds
Is like to that above.

2 Before our Father's throne
We pour our ardent prayers;
Our fears, our hopes, our aims are one,
Our comforts and our cares.

3 We share our mutual woes,
Our mutual burdens bear;
And often for each other flows
The sympathising tear.

4 When we asunder part,
It gives us inward pain;
But we shall still be joined in heart,
And hope to meet again.

5 This glorious hope revives
Our courage by the way;
While each in expectation lives,
And longs to see the day.

## INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER FIVE

### OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE, HOLINESS, AND MARRIAGE

In this chapter the apostle continues his exhortations unto the practical duties of the Christian life, especially those relating unto holiness, purity, and godly conduct. Having in the close of the previous chapter urged believers unto kindness, tenderness, and forgiveness after the example of God Himself, he now presses these duties further and enforces them by the example of Christ and His great love toward His church.

The apostle therefore exhorts believers:

"Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children." (Ephesians 5:1)

As children naturally imitate their earthly fathers, so the saints, being adopted through grace, ought to imitate their heavenly Father in mercy, love, forgiveness, and holiness.

This exhortation is especially enforced by the example of Christ:

"And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us." (Ephesians 5:2)

The greatness of Christ's love appears in that He:

"gave himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God."

The apostle then proceeds to warn against various sins of impurity and uncleanness. Certain sins are condemned as shameful acts altogether unbecoming unto saints and not even fit to be named among the people of God:

"But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you." (Ephesians 5:3)

He likewise condemns sinful speech and corrupt communication:

"Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting." (Ephesians 5:4)

In the place of such corrupt language believers are exhorted rather unto thanksgiving and praise unto God.

These sins are especially dangerous because they exclude impenitent men from any inheritance in:

"the kingdom of Christ and of God." (Ephesians 5:5)

Moreover they bring the wrath of God upon:

"the children of disobedience." (Ephesians 5:6)

Therefore believers are exhorted to separate themselves from such sinful practices and from those who continue in them.

The apostle further enforces this exhortation by reminding believers of the great change grace has wrought within them:

"For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord."

(Ephesians 5:8)

Once they were not merely in darkness, but darkness itself through ignorance and sin. Now through union with Christ they are made light in the Lord and therefore ought to walk accordingly.

The fruits of the Spirit are manifested in:

"all goodness and righteousness and truth." (Ephesians 5:9)

Believers should therefore diligently seek to discern and practise that which is pleasing unto God while avoiding all fellowship with:

"the unfruitful works of darkness." (Ephesians 5:11)

Rather than participating in sinful works, Christians ought lovingly and faithfully to reprove them.

The apostle declares that many of the deeds committed in secret by wicked men are so shameful:

"it is a shame even to speak of those things." (Ephesians 5:12)

Yet the light of the Gospel exposes and manifests such works:

"For whatsoever doth make manifest is light." (Ephesians 5:13)

This truth is confirmed by the solemn exhortation:

"Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." (Ephesians 5:14)

The apostle then urges believers unto a wise and careful walk:

"See then that ye walk circumspectly." (Ephesians 5:15)

Part of such wisdom consists in:

"redeeming the time, because the days are evil." (Ephesians 5:16)

Christians are therefore not to walk foolishly, but should seek diligently to understand:

"what the will of the Lord is." (Ephesians 5:17)

The apostle especially warns against drunkenness, which so often becomes the occasion of many other sins:

"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess." (Ephesians 5:18)

Instead believers should seek continually to be filled with the Holy Spirit, expressing spiritual joy and gratitude through:

"psalms and hymns and spiritual songs." (Ephesians 5:19)

Their hearts and voices should be employed in thanksgiving unto God rather than in the vain and corrupt songs commonly associated with drunkenness and worldly pleasure.

From these general exhortations the apostle proceeds unto the particular duties belonging unto wives and husbands.

He first lays down the general principle:

"Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God." (Ephesians 5:21)

Wives are then exhorted unto loving submission toward their husbands:

"as unto the Lord." (Ephesians 5:22)

This duty arises from the order established by God in marriage, for:

"the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church." (Ephesians 5:23)

The submission of the church unto Christ therefore becomes the pattern of the wife's submission unto her husband.

The apostle next exhorts husbands unto love toward their wives after the example of Christ Himself:

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it." (Ephesians 5:25)

The greatness of Christ's love is displayed in His sacrificial death for His church.

The design of this redeeming work was:

"that he might sanctify and cleanse it." (Ephesians 5:26)

And ultimately:

"that he might present it to himself a glorious church." (Ephesians 5:27)

The apostle further argues that husbands ought to love their wives because the wife is, as it were, one flesh with her husband:

"So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies." (Ephesians 5:28)

No man naturally hates his own flesh but rather nourishes and cherishes it. In the same manner husbands should tenderly care for their wives.

This duty is again illustrated by Christ's care toward His church:

"For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones." (Ephesians 5:30)

The apostle then refers unto the original institution of marriage:

"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife." (Ephesians 5:31)

This union between husband and wife ultimately points unto the far greater mystery of the union between Christ and His church:

"This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church." (Ephesians 5:32)

The chapter concludes with a brief summary of these mutual duties:

"let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and

the wife see that she reverence her husband." (Ephesians 5:33)



**EPHESIANS 5:1**

*"Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children."*

The apostle exhorts believers unto imitation of God Himself.

This imitation does not extend unto the infinite works of divine power and wisdom, which are altogether beyond the ability of the creature, but rather unto those moral excellencies which God graciously displays toward His people — such as mercy, kindness, tenderness, forgiveness, goodness, and love.

Especially the context points unto forgiveness and compassion toward others after the example of God:

"forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." (Ephesians 4:32)

Believers are to imitate God:

"as dear children."

The saints are children of God by adopting grace according unto His eternal purpose and covenant mercy.

This adoption becomes manifest in regeneration and through faith in Jesus Christ.

They are:

"dear children"

because they are loved with an everlasting and unchangeable love.

The love of God toward His people is the fountain from which their adoption flows.

This fatherly love appears in His choosing them in Christ, giving His Son for them, calling them by His grace, preserving them by His power, and regarding them as His peculiar treasure and beloved inheritance.

Therefore it becomes the children of God to imitate their heavenly Father.

Who should the saints desire to follow more than Him who has so freely loved them and bestowed such grace upon them?



**EPHESIANS 5:1**

*"Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children."*

The apostle exhorts believers unto imitation of God Himself.

This imitation does not extend unto the infinite works of divine power and wisdom, which are altogether beyond the ability of the creature, but rather unto those moral excellencies which God graciously displays toward His people — such as mercy, kindness, tenderness, forgiveness, goodness, and love.

Especially the context points unto forgiveness and compassion toward others after the example of God:

*"forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you." (Ephesians 4:32)*

Believers are to imitate God:

*"as dear children."*

The saints are children of God by adopting grace according unto His eternal purpose and covenant mercy.

This adoption becomes manifest in regeneration and through faith in Jesus Christ.

They are:

*"dear children"*

because they are loved with an everlasting and unchangeable love.

The love of God toward His people is the fountain from which their adoption flows.

This fatherly love appears in His choosing them in Christ, giving His Son for them, calling them by His grace, preserving them by His power, and regarding them as His peculiar treasure and beloved inheritance.

Therefore it becomes the children of God to imitate their heavenly Father.

Who should the saints desire to follow more than Him who has so freely loved them and bestowed such grace upon them?

## EPHESIANS 5:2

*"And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us."*

The apostle continues his exhortation unto holy and practical godliness by urging believers to walk continually in love.

This chiefly includes love toward one another, though it likewise comprehends love unto God and unto Christ.

Believers are obliged to love God because of His infinite goodness and because of the glorious discoveries of His love and grace toward them.

Such love manifests itself in desiring to please Him, fearing to offend Him, seeking His glory in all things, and loving all those who belong unto Him.

Likewise the saints ought to love Christ fervently and sincerely because of the excellency of His Person, the greatness of His love toward them, and the many blessings flowing from His redeeming grace.

Love unto Christ appears in obedience unto His commandments, delight in His presence, grief at His absence, and esteem for His truth and ordinances.

Yet the apostle especially intends brotherly love among the saints.

This is Christ's:

*"new commandment,"*

and one of the clearest evidences of regeneration and spiritual life.

To:

*"walk in love"*

means not merely to speak about love, but habitually to practise it in the whole course of life and conversation.

Believers are to perform all duties toward God and one another from a principle of sincere Christian love.

The great example set before them is Christ Himself:

*"as Christ also hath loved us."*

The love of Christ toward His people is altogether unparalleled — free, sovereign, everlasting, and unchangeable.

Yet the apostle does not intend equality between Christ's love and ours, but likeness and imitation.

The chief instance of Christ's love is immediately added:

*"and hath given himself for us."*

Christ gave not merely His possessions or outward comforts, but His own Person.

He surrendered His time, strength, honour, reputation, and at length His very life.

He gave His whole human nature, both soul and body, in union with His divine Person, as a sacrifice for His people.

And this He did:

*"for us,"*

that is, in the room and stead of His church and chosen people while they were yet sinners.

The apostle further declares that Christ gave Himself:

*"an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour."*

Christ was both the Priest and the Sacrifice.

He offered Himself voluntarily unto God as a propitiatory sacrifice for sin in order to satisfy divine justice, make reconciliation, and secure eternal redemption for His people.

This sacrifice was perfectly acceptable unto God because it was spotless, complete, voluntary, and fully sufficient to answer all the demands of divine justice.

Therefore God smelled:

*"a sweet smelling savour"*

in the sacrifice of Christ, being perfectly well pleased in His obedience and atoning death.

By this one offering sin has been fully put away and the people of God perfected forever.

❦

## EPHESIANS 5:3

*"But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints."*

Having exhorted believers unto love and holiness, the apostle now solemnly warns against sins of impurity and uncleanness.

Fornication, properly speaking, refers unto unlawful relations between unmarried persons, though the apostle extends the prohibition unto:

*"all uncleanness."*

This includes every form of sexual impurity contrary unto the law and holiness of God.

Such sins were especially common among the Gentiles and often

regarded lightly within heathen society, yet the apostle utterly condemns them as unbecoming unto the people of God.

He further adds:

*"or covetousness."*

This may include not only greed after worldly things, but also that insatiable lust and corrupt desire which continually seeks sinful indulgence.

The apostle commands that such sins:

*"be not once named among you."*

His meaning is not that believers should never speak against these sins, but rather that such conduct should never be found among the saints so as to give occasion for reproach.

Such practices are wholly inconsistent with the holy calling of believers, whose sins have been washed away by the blood of Christ and whose hearts are sanctified by the Spirit of God.

❦

## EPHESIANS 5:4

*"Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks."*

The apostle proceeds from sins of outward impurity unto sins of speech and conversation.

By:

*"filthiness"*

is intended obscene behaviour, impure gestures, indecent conduct, and corrupt speech tending to excite sinful lusts.

Such words reveal the corruption of the heart and often become occasions for corrupting others likewise.

*"Foolish talking"*

refers not merely unto imprudent speech, but especially unto vain, corrupt, idle, and unprofitable discourse.

This includes foolish tales, empty jesting, light behaviour, and speech unsuitable unto the gravity and holiness becoming Christians.

*"Jesting"*

is condemned when it becomes wanton, dishonest, impure, hurtful unto others, or inconsistent with truth and godliness.

The apostle says these things:

*"are not convenient,"*

that is, they are altogether unsuitable unto the character and profession of the saints.

Instead of such corrupt communication believers should employ their tongues:

*"rather giving of thanks."*

Thanksgiving unto God for temporal and spiritual mercies is far more becoming unto Christians than vain, impure, or foolish speech.

Thus the tongue should be used not to corrupt but to edify, praise God, and minister grace unto those who hear.

❦

## EPHESIANS 5:5

*"For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."*

The apostle solemnly warns believers concerning the dreadful danger of continuing in such sins.

Those who live and die in fornication, uncleanness, or covetousness without repentance demonstrate that they remain strangers unto the grace of God.

The covetous man is called:

*"an idolater"*

because he sets his heart upon worldly gain and serves riches rather than God.

Whatever possesses the chief affections and confidence of the heart becomes, in effect, an idol.

The apostle therefore declares that no such person:

*"hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."*

This kingdom may partly refer unto the visible church wherein openly scandalous sinners ought not to continue without repentance.

Yet chiefly it refers unto the heavenly kingdom of glory.

This inheritance belongs unto the children of God through free grace and the redemption purchased by Christ.

It is not obtained through human merit or works, but bestowed as the gracious inheritance of the saints.

The apostle's meaning is not that all who have ever fallen into such sins are forever excluded from mercy, for many have been recovered through repentance and grace.

Rather those who continue habitually in such sins without regeneration and repentance prove themselves strangers unto the kingdom of God.



## EPHESIANS 5:6

*"Let no man deceive you with vain words."*

The apostle warns believers against false teachers and corrupt men who would seek to excuse or lessen the guilt of these sins.

Some would persuade men that such sins are harmless frailties of human nature or that God will not severely punish them.

Others corrupt the Gospel itself by turning the grace of God into an occasion for sinful living.

Therefore the apostle says:

*"Let no man deceive you."*

The human heart is naturally deceitful and easily inclined unto sinful excuses and false hopes.

But the certainty of divine judgment remains:

"for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience."

God's wrath is revealed both in temporal judgments and in eternal condemnation against impenitent sinners.

These:

*"children of disobedience"*

are those who persist stubbornly in unbelief and rebellion against both the law and Gospel of God.

The consideration that believers have been delivered from this wrath through Christ should greatly move them to avoid such sins.

## EPHESIANS 5:7

*"Be not ye therefore partakers with them."*

Believers are not to participate with ungodly men in their sinful works and corrupt practices.

This participation may occur not only by openly committing the same sins, but also by encouraging, approving, excusing, or carelessly associating with such wickedness.

The saints ought therefore carefully to avoid all fellowship tending unto spiritual corruption or dishonour unto the Gospel.

## EPHESIANS 5:8

*"For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light."*

The apostle again reminds believers of the great change wrought within them through divine grace.

Before conversion they were not merely in darkness but:

*"darkness"*

itself.

Their minds were blinded concerning spiritual things, ignorant of God, strangers unto the way of salvation, and under the dominion of sin and Satan.

But now they are:

*"light in the Lord."*

This spiritual light proceeds entirely from Christ, who is:

*"the light of the world."*

Through the enlightening work of the Holy Spirit believers are brought to see:

the sinfulness of sin, the insufficiency of their own righteousness, the glory of Christ, and the way of salvation through Him.

Therefore they are exhorted to:

*"walk as children of light."*

Their conduct should now correspond with the grace they have received.

The children of light are called unto holiness, truth, sincerity, faith, and godly living rather than the works of darkness from which they have been delivered.



## EPHESIANS 5:9

*"(For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)"*

The apostle here describes the fruits produced by the Holy Spirit within believers.

As a healthy tree naturally bears fruit according unto its nature, so the renewed soul brings forth spiritual fruits through the gracious operation of the Spirit.

These fruits appear:

*"in all goodness and righteousness and truth."*

Goodness includes kindness, compassion, meekness, forgiveness, and readiness to assist those in need.

Righteousness consists in sincere obedience unto God and faithful discharge of duty toward men.

Truth stands opposed unto hypocrisy, deceit, false doctrine, and corrupt speech.

Where the Spirit of God truly dwells, these fruits will appear more or less in the life and conversation of believers.

Though imperfect in this present life, they nevertheless manifest the reality of divine grace within the soul.



## EPHESIANS 5:10

*"Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord."*

Believers ought continually to examine, discern, and approve those things which are pleasing unto God.

Many things are acceptable unto the Lord: the Person and righteousness of Christ, the prayers and praises of His people, works performed in faith, acts of mercy and obedience, and lives ordered according unto His Word.

In order rightly to discern these things, the understanding must be spiritually enlightened and directed by the Holy Spirit.

Human reason alone is insufficient to judge spiritual truth rightly, for many divine mysteries stand above fallen human understanding.

Therefore all things must be tried according unto the Holy Scriptures, which alone are the infallible rule of faith and practice.

Whatever is found agreeable unto the Word of God should be embraced, valued, and diligently practised by believers.

❦

## EPHESIANS 5:11

*"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them."*

The apostle forbids all participation in sinful practices described as: "the unfruitful works of darkness."

*These works are called:*

*"darkness"*

because they proceed from spiritual blindness, are contrary unto the light of God's Word, and commonly seek concealment from public view.

They are:

*"unfruitful"*

because they produce no true profit or spiritual benefit, but rather guilt, shame, corruption, misery, and death.

Believers are not forbidden ordinary civil interaction with unbelievers, for such separation from the world altogether would be impossible while living in this present life.

But Christians must avoid fellowship with sinful practices themselves — whether by committing them, encouraging them, approving them, profiting from them, or silently consenting unto them.

Instead believers are commanded:

*"rather reprove them."*

This reproof may occur both by words and by a holy and consistent life.

The light of a godly conversation itself exposes and condemns the darkness of sinful works.

Thus believers, as children of light, ought by their conduct to manifest the evil of sin and the holiness becoming the Gospel of Christ.

## EPHESIANS 5:2

*"And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us."*

The apostle continues his exhortation unto holy and practical godliness by urging believers to walk continually in love.

This chiefly includes love toward one another, though it likewise comprehends love unto God and unto Christ.

Believers are obliged to love God because of His infinite goodness and because of the glorious discoveries of His love and grace toward them.

Such love manifests itself in desiring to please Him, fearing to offend Him, seeking His glory in all things, and loving all those who belong unto Him.

Likewise the saints ought to love Christ fervently and sincerely because of the excellency of His Person, the greatness of His love toward them, and the many blessings flowing from His redeeming grace.

Love unto Christ appears in obedience unto His commandments, delight in His presence, grief at His absence, and esteem for His truth and ordinances.

Yet the apostle especially intends brotherly love among the saints.

This is Christ's:

*"new commandment,"*

and one of the clearest evidences of regeneration and spiritual life.

To:

*"walk in love"*

means not merely to speak about love, but habitually to practise it in the whole course of life and conversation.

Believers are to perform all duties toward God and one another from a principle of sincere Christian love.

The great example set before them is Christ Himself:

*"as Christ also hath loved us."*

The love of Christ toward His people is altogether unparalleled — free, sovereign, everlasting, and unchangeable.

Yet the apostle does not intend equality between Christ's love and ours,

but likeness and imitation.

The chief instance of Christ's love is immediately added:

*"and hath given himself for us."*

Christ gave not merely His possessions or outward comforts, but His own Person.

He surrendered His time, strength, honour, reputation, and at length His very life.

He gave His whole human nature, both soul and body, in union with His divine Person, as a sacrifice for His people.

And this He did:

*"for us,"*

that is, in the room and stead of His church and chosen people while they were yet sinners.

The apostle further declares that Christ gave Himself:

*"an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour."*

Christ was both the Priest and the Sacrifice.

He offered Himself voluntarily unto God as a propitiatory sacrifice for sin in order to satisfy divine justice, make reconciliation, and secure eternal redemption for His people.

This sacrifice was perfectly acceptable unto God because it was spotless, complete, voluntary, and fully sufficient to answer all the demands of divine justice.

Therefore God smelled:

*"a sweet smelling savour"*

in the sacrifice of Christ, being perfectly well pleased in His obedience and atoning death.

By this one offering sin has been fully put away and the people of God perfected forever.

EPHESIANS 5:3

*"But fornication, and all uncleanness, or covetousness, let it not be once named among you, as becometh saints."*

Having exhorted believers unto love and holiness, the apostle now

solemnly warns against sins of impurity and uncleanness.

Fornication, properly speaking, refers unto unlawful relations between unmarried persons, though the apostle extends the prohibition unto:

*"all uncleanness."*

This includes every form of sexual impurity contrary unto the law and holiness of God.

Such sins were especially common among the Gentiles and often regarded lightly within heathen society, yet the apostle utterly condemns them as unbecoming unto the people of God.

He further adds:

*"or covetousness."*

This may include not only greed after worldly things, but also that insatiable lust and corrupt desire which continually seeks sinful indulgence.

The apostle commands that such sins:

*"be not once named among you."*

His meaning is not that believers should never speak against these sins, but rather that such conduct should never be found among the saints so as to give occasion for reproach.

Such practices are wholly inconsistent with the holy calling of believers, whose sins have been washed away by the blood of Christ and whose hearts are sanctified by the Spirit of God.

## EPHESIANS 5:4

*"Neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor jesting, which are not convenient: but rather giving of thanks."*

The apostle proceeds from sins of outward impurity unto sins of speech and conversation.

By:

*"filthiness"*

is intended obscene behaviour, impure gestures, indecent conduct, and corrupt speech tending to excite sinful lusts.

Such words reveal the corruption of the heart and often become occasions for corrupting others likewise.

*"Foolish talking"*

refers not merely unto imprudent speech, but especially unto vain, corrupt, idle, and unprofitable discourse.

This includes foolish tales, empty jesting, light behaviour, and speech unsuitable unto the gravity and holiness becoming Christians.

*"Jesting"*

is condemned when it becomes wanton, dishonest, impure, hurtful unto others, or inconsistent with truth and godliness.

The apostle says these things:

*"are not convenient,"*

that is, they are altogether unsuitable unto the character and profession of the saints.

Instead of such corrupt communication believers should employ their tongues:

*"rather giving of thanks."*

Thanksgiving unto God for temporal and spiritual mercies is far more becoming unto Christians than vain, impure, or foolish speech.

Thus the tongue should be used not to corrupt but to edify, praise God, and minister grace unto those who hear.

❦

## EPHESIANS 5:5

> *"For this ye know, that no whoremonger, nor unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."*

The apostle solemnly warns believers concerning the dreadful danger of continuing in such sins.

Those who live and die in fornication, uncleanness, or covetousness without repentance demonstrate that they remain strangers unto the grace of God.

The covetous man is called:

*"an idolater"*

because he sets his heart upon worldly gain and serves riches rather than God.

Whatever possesses the chief affections and confidence of the heart becomes, in effect, an idol.

The apostle therefore declares that no such person:

*"hath any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God."*

This kingdom may partly refer unto the visible church wherein openly scandalous sinners ought not to continue without repentance.

Yet chiefly it refers unto the heavenly kingdom of glory.

This inheritance belongs unto the children of God through free grace and the redemption purchased by Christ.

It is not obtained through human merit or works, but bestowed as the gracious inheritance of the saints.

The apostle's meaning is not that all who have ever fallen into such sins are forever excluded from mercy, for many have been recovered through repentance and grace.

Rather those who continue habitually in such sins without regeneration and repentance prove themselves strangers unto the kingdom of God.

❦

## EPHESIANS 5:6

*"Let no man deceive you with vain words."*

The apostle warns believers against false teachers and corrupt men who would seek to excuse or lessen the guilt of these sins.

Some would persuade men that such sins are harmless frailties of human nature or that God will not severely punish them.

Others corrupt the Gospel itself by turning the grace of God into an occasion for sinful living.

Therefore the apostle says:

*"Let no man deceive you."*

The human heart is naturally deceitful and easily inclined unto sinful excuses and false hopes.

But the certainty of divine judgment remains:

*"for because of these things cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience."*

God's wrath is revealed both in temporal judgments and in eternal condemnation against impenitent sinners.

These:

*"children of disobedience"*

are those who persist stubbornly in unbelief and rebellion against both the law and Gospel of God.

The consideration that believers have been delivered from this wrath through Christ should greatly move them to avoid such sins.

❦

## EPHESIANS 5:7

*"Be not ye therefore partakers with them."*

Believers are not to participate with ungodly men in their sinful works and corrupt practices.

This participation may occur not only by openly committing the same sins, but also by encouraging, approving, excusing, or carelessly associating with such wickedness.

The saints ought therefore carefully to avoid all fellowship tending unto spiritual corruption or dishonour unto the Gospel.

❦

## EPHESIANS 5:8

*"For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light."*

The apostle again reminds believers of the great change wrought within them through divine grace.

Before conversion they were not merely in darkness but:

*"darkness"*

itself.

Their minds were blinded concerning spiritual things, ignorant of God, strangers unto the way of salvation, and under the dominion of sin and Satan.

But now they are:

"light in the Lord."

This spiritual light proceeds entirely from Christ, who is:

"the light of the world."

Through the enlightening work of the Holy Spirit believers are brought

to see:

the sinfulness of sin, the insufficiency of their own righteousness, the glory of Christ, and the way of salvation through Him.

Therefore they are exhorted to:

*"walk as children of light."*

Their conduct should now correspond with the grace they have received.

The children of light are called unto holiness, truth, sincerity, faith, and godly living rather than the works of darkness from which they have been delivered.

❦

## EPHESIANS 5:9

*"(For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth;)"*

The apostle here describes the fruits produced by the Holy Spirit within believers.

As a healthy tree naturally bears fruit according unto its nature, so the renewed soul brings forth spiritual fruits through the gracious operation of the Spirit.

These fruits appear:

*"in all goodness and righteousness and truth."*

Goodness includes kindness, compassion, meekness, forgiveness, and readiness to assist those in need.

Righteousness consists in sincere obedience unto God and faithful discharge of duty toward men.

Truth stands opposed unto hypocrisy, deceit, false doctrine, and corrupt speech.

Where the Spirit of God truly dwells, these fruits will appear more or less in the life and conversation of believers.

Though imperfect in this present life, they nevertheless manifest the reality of divine grace within the soul.

❦

## EPHESIANS 5:10

*"Proving what is acceptable unto the Lord."*

Believers ought continually to examine, discern, and approve those things which are pleasing unto God.

Many things are acceptable unto the Lord: the Person and righteousness of Christ, the prayers and praises of His people, works performed in faith, acts of mercy and obedience, and lives ordered according unto His Word.

In order rightly to discern these things, the understanding must be spiritually enlightened and directed by the Holy Spirit.

Human reason alone is insufficient to judge spiritual truth rightly, for many divine mysteries stand above fallen human understanding.

Therefore all things must be tried according unto the Holy Scriptures, which alone are the infallible rule of faith and practice.

Whatever is found agreeable unto the Word of God should be embraced, valued, and diligently practised by believers.

❦

## EPHESIANS 5:11

*"And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them."*

The apostle forbids all participation in sinful practices described as:

*"the unfruitful works of darkness."*

These works are called:

*"darkness"*

because they proceed from spiritual blindness, are contrary unto the light of God's Word, and commonly seek concealment from public view.

They are:

"unfruitful"

because they produce no true profit or spiritual benefit, but rather guilt, shame, corruption, misery, and death.

Believers are not forbidden ordinary civil interaction with unbelievers, for such separation from the world altogether would be impossible while living in this present life.

But Christians must avoid fellowship with sinful practices themselves — whether by committing them, encouraging them, approving them, profiting from them, or silently consenting unto them.

Instead believers are commanded:

*"rather reprove them."*

This reproof may occur both by words and by a holy and consistent life.

The light of a godly conversation itself exposes and condemns the darkness of sinful works.

Thus believers, as children of light, ought by their conduct to manifest the evil of sin and the holiness becoming the Gospel of Christ.

## EPHESIANS 5:12

*"For it is a shame even to speak of those things which are done of them in secret."*

The apostle here gives a further reason why believers ought to avoid fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness and rather reprove them.

The sins practised secretly by wicked and unregenerate men are often so vile and shameful that modesty itself recoils from even mentioning them openly.

If it is shameful to speak of such things, then much more shameful it is to commit them.

The apostle chiefly refers unto the hidden corruptions and impure practices commonly found among the heathen Gentiles and especially among false and corrupt professors who concealed their wickedness beneath a pretence of religion.

Men naturally seek secrecy in sinful works because there remains within the conscience some sense of the evil and shamefulness of sin.

The works of darkness avoid the light because they cannot bear open exposure.

Yet though sinful actions may remain hidden from the eyes of men for a season, they are never concealed from God, before whom:

*"all things are naked and opened."*

Therefore believers should carefully avoid all fellowship with such secret wickedness and conduct themselves in purity and holiness becoming the Gospel of Christ.

❦

## EPHESIANS 5:13

*"But all things that are reproved are made manifest by the light."*

Whatever is reproved and exposed by the light is thereby made manifest and plainly revealed.

This light may refer unto the Word of God, unto the Gospel of Christ, unto the holy lives of believers, or ultimately unto Christ Himself who is:

*"the light of the world."*

The Gospel reveals the true nature and exceeding sinfulness of sin. It strips away false appearances and exposes those things which men naturally desire to conceal.

Likewise the holy conduct of believers serves as a continual testimony against the darkness of ungodliness.

The apostle further says:

*"for whatsoever doth make manifest is light."*

Light naturally reveals and discovers things hidden in darkness.

In the same manner spiritual light exposes the evil of sin and manifests the holiness and truth of God.

Christ by His Gospel and Spirit continually uncovers the hidden works of darkness and brings sinners unto conviction.

Thus believers, being made:

*"light in the Lord,"*

ought by their lives and testimony to shine amid the darkness of the world.

❦

## EPHESIANS 5:14

> *"Wherefore he saith, Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light."*

The apostle here introduces a solemn exhortation in language resembling that of the Old Testament prophets.

Whether these exact words are drawn from Isaiah or from some ancient Christian saying, the substance agrees fully with the doctrine of Scripture.

The exhortation is addressed not unto spiritually dead sinners in the absolute sense, as though men possessed power in themselves to awaken and convert their own souls, but chiefly unto careless and slumbering professors of religion.

Even true believers sometimes fall into spiritual sleepiness through

negligence, worldly conformity, temptation, or careless fellowship with the ungodly.

Therefore the apostle calls them:

*"Awake thou that sleepest."*

Spiritual sleep renders believers dull in prayer, careless in duty, cold in affection, and negligent concerning divine things.

He further adds:

*"and arise from the dead."*

This may signify separation from the company and practices of spiritually dead men among whom believers often become sluggish and spiritually weakened.

The society of ungodly men frequently hardens the conscience, grieves the Spirit of God, and hinders spiritual watchfulness.

Therefore believers ought to separate themselves from sinful fellowship and arise unto greater holiness and diligence.

Unto such awakened souls the promise is given:

*"and Christ shall give thee light."*

Christ continually grants fresh discoveries of His grace, mercy, truth, and love unto those who seek Him diligently.

Believers stand in continual need of renewed light: light into the forgiveness of sins, light into the promises of God, light for direction in duty, and light from the countenance of Christ Himself.

Such light flows only from Christ, who remains the fountain of all spiritual illumination unto His people.

❦

## EPHESIANS 5:15

*"See then that ye walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise."*

The apostle now exhorts believers unto great care and watchfulness in the whole course of their Christian walk.

The Christian life requires wisdom, vigilance, perseverance, and continual dependence upon divine grace.

To walk:

*"circumspectly"*

is to walk carefully, diligently, accurately, and cautiously, watching over both heart and conduct.

Believers ought continually to observe: the path in which they walk, the dangers surrounding them, the temptations that oppose them, and the rule of God's Word directing them.

Those who walk carelessly after the flesh are described as:

*"fools."*

Such men disregard the danger of sin, neglect the commands of God, and pursue paths leading unto destruction.

But believers are exhorted to walk:

*"as wise."*

True wisdom appears in walking according unto the Word of God, following the example of Christ, seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and conducting oneself in holiness and prudence before both saints and sinners.

The wise Christian lives as a pilgrim and stranger in this present evil world while continually seeking the glory of God and the good of souls.

❦

**EPHESIANS 5:16**

*"Redeeming the time, because the days are evil."*

Time is exceedingly precious and once lost can never be recalled.

Therefore believers are exhorted diligently to improve every opportunity afforded unto them for the glory of God and the good of others.

To:

*"redeem the time"*

signifies carefully using every season and opportunity for spiritual profit and usefulness.

Christians should not squander time in vanity, slothfulness, worldly excess, or sinful pleasures, but should employ it faithfully in: prayer, meditation, hearing the Word, works of mercy, spiritual growth, and usefulness unto others.

This exhortation is especially necessary:

*"because the days are evil."*

The world abounds with sin, temptation, false doctrine, corruption, persecution, and spiritual danger.

Evil men and seducers continually seek to draw believers away from holiness and truth.

Therefore Christians ought carefully to seize every opportunity for obedience and spiritual profit while such opportunities remain.



**EPHESIANS 5:17**

*"Wherefore be ye not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is."*

Because the days are evil and spiritual dangers abound, believers must not live carelessly or foolishly.

True wisdom consists not merely in speculative knowledge, but in understanding and obeying the revealed will of God.

There is indeed the secret will of God, hidden within His eternal counsel and only known fully unto Himself.

But the apostle here chiefly refers unto His revealed will made known in the Holy Scriptures.

This revealed will includes: the doctrines of the Gospel, the commands of God, the duties of holiness, and the way of salvation through Christ.

Believers must therefore diligently seek spiritual understanding through: the Word of God, prayer, meditation, and the illuminating work of the Holy Spirit.

The right understanding of God's will is practical rather than merely intellectual.

It is seen not only in knowing the truth, but in sincerely desiring and endeavouring to walk according unto it.



EPHESIANS 5:18

*"And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit."*

The apostle now warns against the sin of drunkenness and contrasts it with the spiritual fulness enjoyed by believers through the Holy Spirit.

Drunkenness is a sinful and excessive use of strong drink whereby the mind becomes disturbed and deprived of sober judgment and self-control.

Though wine itself may lawfully be used with moderation and thanksgiving, the apostle condemns all excessive and habitual indulgence.

This sin greatly dishonours God, harms both soul and body, wastes earthly substance, unfits men for duty, and opens the door unto many further corruptions and temptations.

Therefore believers must carefully avoid every occasion leading unto such excess.

Instead the apostle exhorts:

*"but be filled with the Spirit."*

This filling with the Spirit does not merely refer unto extraordinary miraculous gifts, but chiefly unto the ordinary gracious operations of the Holy Spirit within believers.

The Spirit fills the saints with: love, joy, peace, spiritual comfort, holy desires, and lively affections toward Christ.

As drunkenness excites carnal joy and disorder, so the Spirit produces holy joy, spiritual delight, and gracious communion with God.

The believer filled with the Spirit finds greater sweetness in divine things than worldly men ever find in sinful pleasures.

❦

## EPHESIANS 5:19

*"Speaking to yourselves in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs."*

The apostle now describes some of the gracious effects flowing from spiritual joy and fulness in the Holy Spirit.

Believers are to employ their speech not in corrupt communication or worldly songs, but in holy praise unto God.

By:

*"psalms and hymns and spiritual songs"*

the apostle chiefly refers unto those sacred songs given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit and suitable for the worship and edification of the church.

These spiritual songs differ altogether from the profane, vain, and wanton songs commonly used among worldly men.

The singing intended here is not merely inward meditation, but vocal praise offered unto God with understanding and spiritual affection.

Therefore the apostle adds:

"singing and making melody in your hearts to the Lord."

True spiritual singing arises from the heart as well as from the lips.

The melody pleasing unto God is not merely outward musical sound, but sincere grace and spiritual affection within the soul.

Believers ought therefore to sing: thankfully, reverently, spiritually, and with hearts engaged unto the glory of God.

The chief object of all such praise is:

*"the Lord,"*

unto whom alone all honour, worship, thanksgiving, and glory rightly belong.

## EPHESIANS 5:20

*"Giving thanks always for all things unto God and the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

The apostle continues describing the gracious effects produced within believers through the filling of the Holy Spirit. One principal fruit of spiritual joy is continual thanksgiving unto God.

Believers possess abundant cause for gratitude both in temporal and spiritual things. They are to give thanks for life and preservation, for daily mercies and provisions, for deliverances and comforts, for the Gospel and ordinances, for electing love, redeeming grace, justification through Christ, sanctification by the Spirit, and the hope of eternal glory.

The apostle says:

*"always."*

Thanksgiving ought not merely to abound in times of outward prosperity, but likewise in seasons of affliction, temptation, persecution, and spiritual trial. Even under the darkest providences believers still possess cause for gratitude because all things work together for good unto them that love God.

This thanksgiving is directed:

*"unto God and the Father."*

God is the Father of mercies, the Author of every good and perfect gift, and the covenant Father of all believers through Jesus Christ.

The apostle further adds:

*"in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."*

All spiritual blessings come unto the saints through Christ alone, and all acceptable praise and thanksgiving ascend unto God through His mediation. Without Christ no sinner could approach unto God acceptably. Thus believers render thanks through Him who is their Mediator, Advocate, and Great High Priest before the Father.

❦

## EPHESIANS 5:21

"Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God."

The apostle now lays down a general principle of humility, order, and mutual submission among believers before proceeding unto the particular duties of domestic relationships.

This submission does not imply equality of office or authority in every relation, but rather a spirit of humility, meekness, love, and willingness to serve one another according unto the order appointed by God.

In civil society believers are to submit unto lawful magistrates and authorities ordained by God for the good of men. Within the church younger believers ought to honour and esteem those more mature in grace, and church members ought humbly to receive faithful instruction, admonition, and exhortation according unto the Word of God.

Likewise within families wives, children, and servants are to fulfil the duties belonging unto their respective stations. Even where authority exists, believers are still called unto mutual love, patience, forbearance, and self-denial toward one another.

The apostle further adds:

*"in the fear of God."*

The fear of God is both the motive and the rule of all true submission. Believers submit not merely from outward necessity or fear of man, but from reverence unto God Himself whose authority and order they acknowledge. Thus every duty should be performed conscientiously, sincerely, and with an eye unto the glory of God.

❦

## EPHESIANS 5:22

"*Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord.*"

The apostle now applies the general principle of submission particularly unto wives within the marriage relationship.

This submission consists chiefly in honour, reverence, love, obedience, and a willing acknowledgment of the order established by God within marriage. The wife ought respectfully to regard her husband, assist him faithfully in the affairs of the household, and willingly unite with him in all things lawful and proper.

This subjection belongs unto:

*"your own husbands,"*

not unto other men.

The apostle thereby preserves both the honour and order of marriage as ordained by God from the beginning. The duty itself is reasonable and fitting because the woman was created after the man, from the man, and for the man as a suitable helper unto him.

The apostle further adds:

*"as unto the Lord."*

This does not place the husband upon equality with Christ, nor does it require obedience unto anything sinful or contrary unto God's Word. Rather the wife is to perform this duty sincerely, willingly, and conscientiously as an act of obedience unto Christ Himself. The submission of the church unto Christ becomes the pattern and example of the wife's submission unto her husband.

❦

**EPHESIANS 5:23**

*"For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church."*

The apostle grounds the duty of the wife's submission upon the divine order established within marriage.

The husband is called:

*"the head of the wife,"*

not as a tyrant exercising cruel domination, but as one entrusted with loving leadership, care, and responsibility within the family.

This headship reflects the order appointed by God in creation itself. The apostle illustrates this relationship by comparing it unto Christ and His

church:

*"even as Christ is the head of the church."*

Christ exercises supreme authority, government, protection, provision, and care over His people. The church depends entirely upon Him for life, righteousness, guidance, strength, preservation, and salvation.

The apostle further declares:

*"and he is the saviour of the body."*

The:

*"body"*

is the church united unto Christ as its living Head.

Christ preserves, nourishes, protects, and eternally saves every member belonging unto His mystical body. Thus the comparison between husband and wife derives its dignity and meaning from the greater and spiritual union existing between Christ and His redeemed church.



**EPHESIANS 5:24**

*"Therefore as the church is subject unto Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing."*

The church willingly submits herself unto Christ because of His love, wisdom, authority, and saving grace. Believers depend wholly upon Him and acknowledge His right to govern and direct them according unto His holy will.

The church therefore esteems all His commandments righteous and seeks cheerfully to obey Him from a principle of love and gratitude.

In like manner wives are exhorted to submit themselves unto their own husbands:

*"in every thing,"*

that is, in all things lawful, proper, and agreeable unto the Word of God.

The apostle does not require obedience unto anything sinful or contrary unto conscience rightly informed by Scripture. The order established by God within marriage is designed not for oppression but for peace, harmony, and mutual good.

## EPHESIANS 5:25

*"Husbands, love your wives."*

This love consists in a strong and sincere affection toward them, in taking real delight and pleasure in their company, in showing honour and respect unto them, and in seeking their comfort, peace, and happiness. It is manifested in a quiet, constant, and loving dwelling together, in faithfully providing those things necessary for them, in protecting them from injury and mistreatment, in concealing their infirmities rather than exposing them, and in maintaining charitable and favourable thoughts concerning them.

Such love ought to be hearty, sincere, and free from selfishness or mere outward appearance. It should be shown both privately and publicly, and ought to remain chaste, faithful, constant, and enduring throughout life.

This affection should exceed that shown unto neighbours or even unto parents, though never so as to interfere with supreme love unto God and Christ.

There are many reasons why husbands should thus love their wives. They are given unto them as companions and helpers. They are wives joined unto them by covenant bond. They are their own wives, their own flesh, and, as it were, their own selves.

Above all, the example of Christ Himself ought to move husbands unto this duty:

*"even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it."*

Christ loved His church with an everlasting and unchangeable love. She is His bride and spouse whom He betrothed unto Himself from eternity, having received her from the Father as His chosen people.

The church here intended is the church of the firstborn, whose names are written in heaven, even all the elect of God redeemed by the blood of Christ.

## EPHESIANS 5:26

"That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word."

The church by nature is defiled both by original sin and by actual transgressions. Even the elect of God, though loved by Christ from

everlasting, fell in Adam with the rest of mankind and in their natural condition live under both the guilt and pollution of sin.

Christ therefore gave Himself for His people in order that He might deliver them from this miserable estate. By His sacrificial death He made atonement and satisfaction for their sins. By the shedding of His blood He cleanses them from all iniquity, and by His perfect righteousness He justifies them before the sight of divine justice.

This sanctifying and cleansing refers chiefly unto justification through the blood and righteousness of Christ, though sanctification by the Spirit also flows from His redeeming work.

The apostle speaks of:

*"the washing of water."*

This expression refers not unto baptism itself, for baptism neither removes sin nor regenerates the soul. Rather it points unto the blood of Christ which is the true fountain opened for cleansing from all sin.

The cleansing is said to be:

*"by the word."*

This may refer unto the Gospel itself, which proclaims glad tidings of peace, pardon, atonement, and justification through Christ, or unto the sentence of justification spiritually applied unto the conscience through the Word and Spirit of God.



## EPHESIANS 5:27

*"That he might present it to himself a glorious church."*

There is a sense in which Christ presented His church unto the Father through His death, having gathered together His elect, reconciled them unto God, and made them holy and acceptable in His sight.

There is likewise a continual presentation now in heaven where Christ appears before the Father on behalf of His people and makes continual intercession for them.

But here the apostle especially speaks of Christ presenting the church unto Himself.

This presentation is partly experienced even now when believers are clothed in His righteousness, washed in His blood, and regarded by Him as

fair and accepted. It shall reach its fullest manifestation in the resurrection and eternal glory when the marriage supper of the Lamb shall come and His bride shall appear clothed in fine linen, clean and white.

Then indeed the church shall appear:

*"a glorious church."*

The apostle adds:

"not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing."

The bodies of the saints shall then be fashioned like unto Christ's glorious body. Their souls shall be perfectly conformed unto His image, entirely free from sin, corruption, infirmity, false doctrine, hypocrisy, and every blemish whatsoever.

The allusion appears to be unto the customs of the Jews in marriage, where any notable blemish or defect rendered a woman unfit for espousal. But Christ's church shall be perfectly pure and beautiful in His sight and shall never be rejected by Him.

Therefore the apostle concludes:

*"but that it should be holy and without blemish."*

This holiness arises through justification by Christ's righteousness, cleansing by His blood, and sanctification by His Spirit.

❦

## EPHESIANS 5:28

*"So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies."*

The apostle further enforces the duty of marital love by the nearness of the marriage union itself.

Among the Jews it was commonly said that a man's wife was as his own body, and their teachers instructed husbands to love their wives as themselves.

Thus the apostle declares:

*"he that loveth his wife loveth himself."*

Since husband and wife are one flesh, the husband who truly loves and cares for his wife is in reality loving and caring for himself.

The marriage union established by God therefore requires tender affection, faithful care, and continual love toward one another.

❦

## EPHESIANS 5:29

"For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the church."

It is contrary unto nature for a man deliberately to hate and neglect his own body.

Rather he naturally nourishes and cherishes it by providing food, clothing, care, and protection.

In the same manner husbands ought lovingly to care for their wives.

The apostle again directs attention unto Christ Himself:

*"even as the Lord the church."*

Christ never hated His church and people. His love toward them is everlasting, unchangeable, and full of delight and complacency.

Though He may at times correct His people in love or hide the sensible manifestations of His favour, yet He never ceases truly to love them.

He nourishes His church as a shepherd feeds his flock and as a father cares for his children. He feeds His people with Himself as the Bread of Life, with the promises of the covenant, with the doctrines of the Gospel, and with continual supplies of grace through His Spirit, Word, ministers, and ordinances.

He likewise cherishes His church by granting intimate communion with Himself, by clothing His people with His righteousness, and by supplying all things necessary for their spiritual comfort and eternal happiness.

Thus these expressions describe the continual care Christ exercises over His redeemed people both in this world and in the world to come.

❦

## EPHESIANS 5:30

*"For we are members of his body."*

The apostle speaks here not of Christ's natural body physically considered, but of His mystical body, namely the church.

Believers are united unto Christ not by natural generation but by spiritual union through grace.

The church belongs unto Christ by the Father's gift, by His own redeeming purchase, and by covenant relation. Christ is the living Head of this body, and all true believers are members united unto Him.

The apostle further adds:

*"of his flesh, and of his bones."*

These expressions set forth the closeness, tenderness, and reality of the union existing between Christ and His church.

As husband and wife become one flesh in marriage, so believers are spiritually united unto Christ in everlasting covenant communion.

All spiritual life, grace, righteousness, strength, and salvation flow from Him unto His people through this blessed union.

❦

## EPHESIANS 5:31

*"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife."*

These words contain the original law and institution of marriage established by God from the beginning.

Marriage is therefore not a merely human arrangement but a divine ordinance appointed by God Himself.

The marriage union requires a unique and affectionate bond surpassing all other earthly relationships. The husband is to cleave unto his wife in love, faithfulness, companionship, and covenant union.

The apostle further adds:

*"and they two shall be one flesh."*

This signifies a deep union of affection, life, and companionship ordained by God within marriage.

❦

## EPHESIANS 5:32

*"This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church."*

The institution of marriage contains within it a profound spiritual mystery.

The union between husband and wife serves as a divinely appointed figure of the union existing between Christ and His church.

Thus Adam and Eve were themselves a type and shadow of Christ and His redeemed people.

As Eve was formed from Adam while he slept, so the church flows from the sufferings and death of Christ.

As Eve was taken from Adam's side, so the blessings of justification and sanctification flow from Christ through the blood and water that issued from His wounded side.

As Eve was brought unto Adam by God Himself, so the church is drawn unto Christ by sovereign grace and willingly joined unto Him through the operation of the Spirit.

Adam's joyful acknowledgment of Eve as his own likewise foreshadows Christ's loving reception of His church whom He has redeemed unto Himself.

Thus the whole institution of marriage ultimately points unto the glorious and everlasting union between Christ and His church.



## EPHESIANS 5:33

*"Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband."*

The apostle concludes the chapter by briefly summarising the mutual duties of husband and wife.

Every husband is exhorted personally and individually to love his wife as himself, since they are one flesh united together by God.

This love ought continually to manifest itself in tenderness, faithfulness, provision, patience, honour, and affectionate care.

Likewise the wife is exhorted to reverence her husband, showing him honour, respect, love, and willing submission according unto the order appointed by God.

Thus where both husband and wife faithfully discharge their duties in the fear of God, marriage becomes a beautiful reflection of the union between Christ and His church.

## INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER SIX

### OF CHRISTIAN DUTIES AND THE WHOLE ARMOUR OF GOD

In this chapter the apostle continues his exhortations concerning relative and domestic duties, particularly those belonging unto children and parents, servants and masters. Having concluded his instructions concerning husbands and wives, he now turns unto other relationships appointed by God within society and the household.

After these domestic exhortations, the apostle proceeds unto a solemn and comprehensive exhortation directed unto all believers generally, urging them unto steadfastness, perseverance, and spiritual warfare through the strength of Christ and the whole armour of God.

The chapter concludes with the apostle's request for prayer, the reason for sending Tychicus unto them, and his final apostolical salutation.

The apostle begins with the duties of children toward their parents:

*"Children, obey your parents in the Lord." (Ephesians 6:1)*

This obedience includes submission, honour, reverence, and respectful conduct toward father and mother. The apostle enforces this duty both from the law of nature and from the express commandment of God:

"Honour thy father and mother." (Ephesians 6:2)

He further reminds them that this commandment carries with it a gracious promise:

*"That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth." (Ephesians 6:3)*

The apostle next addresses fathers and parents generally, exhorting them not to exercise unreasonable severity toward their children:

*"And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath." (Ephesians 6:4)*

Rather they are to bring them up carefully and faithfully:

*"in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."*

The instruction and discipline of children ought therefore to be governed by wisdom, tenderness, and true concern for their spiritual welfare.

The apostle then proceeds unto the duties of servants toward their masters:

*"Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh." (Ephesians 6:5)*

This obedience is to be rendered with sincerity, faithfulness, reverence, and singleness of heart, not merely with outward appearance or:

*"eyeservice, as menpleasers."*

Rather servants are to perform their duties conscientiously as unto Christ Himself, remembering that in serving faithfully they ultimately serve the Lord:

*"doing the will of God from the heart." (Ephesians 6:6)*

The apostle further encourages them with the promise that whatever good thing any man does:

*"the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bond or free." (Ephesians 6:8)*

Masters likewise are exhorted to act justly and kindly toward their servants:

*"And, ye masters, do the same things unto them." (Ephesians 6:9)*

They are forbidden to rule by cruelty, threatening, or oppression, remembering that both master and servant alike stand under the authority of one heavenly Master:

*"neither is there respect of persons with him."*

From these domestic duties the apostle passes unto a general exhortation concerning spiritual warfare and perseverance.

Believers are called to firmness and constancy because they face many enemies who are powerful, subtle, and far stronger than themselves:

*"Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." (Ephesians 6:10)*

The strength necessary for spiritual conflict is not found within man himself, but entirely in Christ.

Therefore believers are exhorted:

*"Put on the whole armour of God." (Ephesians 6:11)*

This spiritual armour is necessary because Christians wrestle not merely against flesh and blood, but against spiritual enemies:

*"against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world." (Ephesians 6:12)*

The apostle therefore urges believers to take unto themselves the whole armour of God in order that they may:

*"withstand in the evil day." (Ephesians 6:13)*

He then describes the several parts of this armour, namely: the girdle of truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the shoes of the preparation of the Gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit which is the Word of God.

Together with these graces and spiritual weapons believers are exhorted continually to persevere in prayer:

*"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit." (Ephesians 6:18)*

The mention of prayer leads the apostle particularly to request the prayers of the Ephesian believers for himself:

*"And for me, that utterance may be given unto me." (Ephesians 6:19)*

Though imprisoned for the Gospel, he desires boldness and liberty in preaching the mystery of Christ, for which he is:

*"an ambassador in bonds." (Ephesians 6:20)*

His imprisonment itself demonstrated the sincerity of his ministry and the great value he placed upon the Gospel he preached.

The apostle then informs the Ephesians of his reason for sending Tychicus unto them:

*"But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do, Tychicus… shall make known to you all things." (Ephesians 6:21)*

Tychicus is described as:

*"a beloved brother and faithful minister in the Lord."*

He was sent both to inform them concerning the apostle's circumstances and to comfort and encourage their hearts.

The epistle concludes with the apostle's affectionate salutation and benediction:

*"Peace be to the brethren, and love with faith." (Ephesians 6:23)*

The blessings desired for them are peace, love, faith, and grace, all flowing from:

"God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Finally the apostle closes with the gracious declaration:

*"Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. Amen." (Ephesians 6:24)*

Thus the epistle ends with a blessing pronounced upon all true believers who sincerely love the Lord Jesus Christ.

**CHAPTER SIX**

## EPHESIANS 6:1

*"Children, obey your parents in the Lord."*

The persons whose duty this is are:

*"children,"*

whether male or female, young or old, and in whatsoever condition of life they may be found.

Though chiefly intended of natural and lawful offspring, yet the duty extends likewise unto adopted children, children-in-law, and all standing under parental authority.

The obedience required is due not only unto immediate parents, both father and mother, but also unto all who stand in the place of parents, such as guardians, step-parents, grandparents, nurses, and others in the ascending relation.

Children are therefore to yield obedience in all things lawful, just, and good — in whatsoever agrees with the Word and will of God.

This obedience should not be merely outward or verbal, nor rendered from selfish or mercenary motives, but should proceed sincerely and heartily from gratitude and thankful affection for the care, instruction, and kindness received from parents.

The apostle further adds:

*"in the Lord."*

This may either signify that such obedience must always remain within the bounds of the Lord's will and commandment, or that children ought to obey because this duty itself is commanded by the Lord, is pleasing in His sight, and tends unto His glory.

The apostle then adds:

*"for this is right."*

The righteousness of this duty appears plainly by the light of nature itself, for even heathen nations have recognised and taught the honour due unto parents.

Reason itself teaches the equity of such obedience, and the law of God expressly confirms it, since all His commandments are holy, just, and good.

## EPHESIANS 6:2

*"Honour thy father and mother."*

The apostle here explains more fully the duty owed unto parents.

Children are not only to obey their parents outwardly, but also to love, fear, reverence, and esteem them inwardly.

They are to submit unto their correction, bear patiently with their infirmities, acknowledge offences committed against them, and avoid exposing their weaknesses unnecessarily.

Parents are to be honoured: in thought, in speech, and in behaviour.

Children ought highly to esteem them, speak respectfully unto them and concerning them, and conduct themselves toward them with reverence and honour.

Likewise when parents become aged or fall into necessity, children are bound to assist, relieve, maintain, and comfort them according unto their ability.

Thus honouring parents extends beyond words unto practical care and faithful support.

The apostle further says:

*"which is the first commandment with promise."*

This is the fifth commandment in the Decalogue and the first commandment unto which a particular promise is expressly attached.

The promise connected with it chiefly concerns long life and wellbeing under the blessing of God.

## EPHESIANS 6:3

*"That it may be well with thee, and thou mayest live long on the earth."*

Length of days is in itself a temporal blessing proceeding from the

goodness of God.

Though the exact number of man's days is fixed according unto the decree of God and though obedient children do not always outwardly live longer than others, yet ordinarily obedience unto parents tends unto peace, stability, wellbeing, and preservation.

On the other hand, disobedience and rebellion against parents often bring severe judgments from God both in this life and in that which is to come.

The apostle slightly alters the wording from the original commandment delivered unto Israel because he now applies the command generally unto all nations and peoples rather than unto the Jews alone in the land of Canaan.

Thus the promise extends generally unto temporal wellbeing under the providence of God together with spiritual blessing flowing from obedience unto His commandments.



## EPHESIANS 6:4

*"And, ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath."*

The apostle now directs his exhortation particularly unto fathers, who as heads of families are often more inclined unto severity and harshness.

Parents may provoke their children unto wrath: by unreasonable commands, by continual harshness, by public reproaches, by passionate words, by unjust preferences between children, by unnecessary severity, or by neglecting their proper care and instruction.

The apostle does not forbid all correction, rebuke, or discipline, for these are necessary duties belonging unto faithful parents.

Yet correction ought always to be governed by wisdom, tenderness, moderation, and true concern for the child's welfare.

Excessive harshness often hardens the heart, alienates affection, discourages obedience, and provokes sinful anger.

Therefore the apostle adds:

*"but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."*

Children ought carefully to be instructed in the knowledge of divine truth.

Parents should teach them the Scriptures, set before them godly examples, guard them from corrupt company, pray with them and for them,

and diligently bring them under the ordinary means of grace and public worship.

Such faithful instruction, when accompanied by the blessing of God, often becomes greatly useful unto their spiritual good.

The example of Abraham remains worthy of imitation:

*"For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him." (Genesis 18:19)*

❦

## EPHESIANS 6:5

*"Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh."*

The apostle enlarges considerably upon the duties of servants because among them there was often greater ignorance, impatience, and temptation unto discontent.

False teachers had also abused the doctrine of Christian liberty by suggesting that servitude was inconsistent with the freedom of the Gospel.

The persons here addressed include both bondservants and hired servants.

They are exhorted to obey their earthly masters whether rich or poor, believing or unbelieving, gentle or severe, provided their commands remain lawful and consistent with the will of God.

The apostle describes masters as:

*"according to the flesh."*

Their authority extends only unto outward and temporal matters belonging unto this present life. They possess no authority over conscience or over the soul in spiritual things contrary unto God.

The obedience required is to be rendered:

*"with fear and trembling."*

This signifies reverence, humility, carefulness not to offend, and respectful submission.

Yet above all such obedience should proceed from the fear of God Himself who commands these duties.

The apostle further adds:

*"in singleness of heart."*

Servants are to obey sincerely, faithfully, and honestly, without hypocrisy, deceit, or pretence.

And this obedience is to be rendered:

*"as unto Christ."*

For in faithfully performing lawful duties unto earthly masters, believers ultimately serve the Lord Himself whose will they thereby fulfil.

❦

## EPHESIANS 6:6

*"Not with eyeservice, as menpleasers."*

The apostle condemns that false and hypocritical service which appears diligent only while under the master's eye.

Some labour merely to gain favour and praise from men while neglecting duty when unobserved.

Such conduct is inconsistent with sincerity and Christian faithfulness.

Instead the apostle exhorts believers to serve:

*"as the servants of Christ."*

Whatever lawful calling believers occupy, they are ultimately servants of Christ Himself and therefore ought faithfully to perform every duty for His sake.

The apostle further adds:

*"doing the will of God from the heart."*

Their obedience should not arise merely from outward necessity or fear of punishment, but from willing submission unto the will of God.

Thus even ordinary earthly labour becomes honourable when performed sincerely unto the Lord.

❦

## EPHESIANS 6:7

*"With good will doing service."*

The duties of servants ought to be performed willingly, cheerfully, and with a ready mind rather than grudgingly or resentfully.

Believers should not regard faithful labour as a burden merely forced

upon them, but as part of their obedience unto God.

The apostle again reminds them that they serve:

*"as to the Lord, and not to men."*

Though outwardly labouring for earthly masters, believers in truth serve Christ Himself whose providence placed them in their calling.

Thus the Christian servant performs earthly duties with heavenly motives.

❦

**EPHESIANS 6:8**

*"Knowing that whatsoever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord."*

The apostle encourages servants by directing their thoughts unto the reward graciously promised by God.

Whatever good is performed sincerely according unto the will of God and from right principles shall not be forgotten before Him.

Though earthly masters may overlook or fail fully to reward faithful service, the Lord Himself takes notice of every duty performed unto His glory.

Therefore believers should labour faithfully not merely for temporal reward, but looking chiefly unto the gracious approbation of Christ.

The apostle adds:

*"whether he be bond or free."*

Before God there is no distinction in spiritual acceptance between servant and master, slave and free man, but all alike stand upon the same ground of grace in Christ Jesus.

❦

**EPHESIANS 6:9**

*"And, ye masters, do the same things unto them."*

The apostle now exhorts masters concerning their duties toward servants.

This does not mean that masters are to obey servants, but that they likewise ought to act with sincerity, kindness, justice, moderation, and goodwill.

Masters should care not only for the outward welfare of servants, but also for their spiritual good.

They ought to instruct them in divine things, encourage attendance upon the means of grace, set before them godly examples, and exercise humanity and compassion toward them.

The apostle further says:

*"forbearing threatening."*

Masters ought not continually to govern by harshness, terror, and excessive severity.

Though correction and authority may at times be necessary, yet cruelty, unreasonable threats, and oppressive treatment are condemned.

The apostle enforces this duty by reminding masters:

"knowing that your Master also is in heaven."

Christ Himself is the common Lord both of masters and servants alike.

Earthly authority is temporary and limited, but all men alike must appear before the judgment seat of Christ.

Therefore masters should govern with humility, justice, and mercy knowing that they themselves remain accountable unto their heavenly Master.

The apostle concludes:

*"neither is there respect of persons with him."*

God judges not according unto outward rank, wealth, condition, or earthly authority, but according unto righteousness and truth.

Thus both master and servant alike stand equally dependent upon divine grace and equally accountable before God.

## EPHESIANS 6:10

*"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."*

The apostle now concludes his practical exhortations by directing believers unto steadfastness and spiritual warfare.

He addresses the saints as:

*"my brethren,"*

not merely according unto common language and affection, but because they were fellow members of the same spiritual family and household of

God.

This affectionate title expresses both his humility and his love toward them and was intended to encourage them unto perseverance in duty.

The exhortation:

*"be strong in the Lord"*

is necessary because none of the duties before commanded can be rightly performed in human strength alone.

Likewise believers are surrounded by many powerful enemies against whom they possess no sufficiency in themselves.

Therefore the apostle directs them unto Christ Himself, in whom dwell everlasting strength, divine power, and almighty might.

Though believers are weak and unable of themselves either to resist sin or overcome Satan, yet strength is laid up in Christ for them and communicated unto them by His Spirit.

This strength is enjoyed through faith, prayer, meditation upon Christ, waiting upon Him in His ordinances, and continual dependence upon His grace.

Thus believers are enabled through the inward strengthening of the Holy Spirit to persevere faithfully in the Christian warfare.

❦

## EPHESIANS 6:11

*"Put on the whole armour of God."*

The armour here intended is not that armour which God Himself figuratively wears in judgment against His enemies, but rather that complete spiritual armour which He has prepared and provided for His people.

It is called: "the armour of God" because it is: prepared by God, bestowed by God, spiritual and divine in nature, designed for the Lord's battles, and rendered effectual only through His power.

This armour is:

*"whole"*

or complete.

No part of it is unnecessary or to be neglected, but every portion must be taken up and used by the believer.

The apostle does not command believers to manufacture this armour

for themselves, but to:

*"put on"*

what God has already graciously provided.

This language supposes that believers are soldiers engaged in continual warfare and surrounded by dangerous enemies.

The great purpose of this armour is:

*"that ye may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil."*

Satan is the grand adversary both of Christ and of His people. He is exceedingly powerful, subtle, crafty, and experienced in every evil device.

Therefore believers require complete spiritual armour in order to withstand: his temptations, his accusations, his deceptions, and all his malicious stratagems.

Through the strength of Christ and the use of this armour believers not only stand their ground, but in the end obtain victory through Him who has loved them.



**EPHESIANS 6:12**

*"For we wrestle not against flesh and blood."*

The apostle gives the reason why believers must be spiritually armed and prepared for conflict.

The Christian warfare is not chiefly against:

*"flesh and blood,"*

that is, against frail and mortal men alone.

Though believers often endure opposition from wicked men, false teachers, persecutors, and enemies of the Gospel, yet the principal conflict lies deeper and more spiritual.

The apostle therefore says:

*"but against principalities, against powers."*

By these expressions are intended evil angels and wicked spirits under the dominion of Satan.

These fallen spirits possess great power, subtlety, order, and influence in carrying forward the kingdom of darkness.

The apostle further describes them as:

*"the rulers of the darkness of this world."*

Satan is elsewhere called:

*"the prince of this world"*

and:

*"the god of this world,"*

because he exercises dreadful influence over unregenerate men who remain in spiritual darkness.

The devils rule over those blinded by sin, unbelief, and ignorance of God.

The apostle then adds:

*"against spiritual wickedness in high places."*

These evil spirits are called:

*"spiritual"*

because they are immaterial beings, though altogether wicked, corrupt, deceitful, and malicious.

Their dwelling:

*"in high places"*

does not signify the highest heaven where God and His holy angels dwell, but rather the airy regions above the earth wherein Satan exercises much of his power and influence.

Thus believers are surrounded by spiritual enemies continually watching for occasions against them.

Therefore they must remain armed, vigilant, and dependent upon divine strength.

❦

## EPHESIANS 6:13

*"Wherefore take unto you the whole armour of God."*

The apostle repeats the exhortation previously given because of the greatness and danger of the enemies described.

Believers must not neglect any portion of the armour God has provided.

The end of taking this armour is:

*"that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day."*

The:

*"evil day"*

may refer generally unto seasons of temptation, persecution, spiritual darkness, affliction, heresy, and intense satanic assault.

At such times believers especially require spiritual armour in order faithfully to resist the enemy and stand firm in the truth.

The apostle further adds:

*"and having done all, to stand."*

This signifies not merely entering the conflict, but persevering faithfully unto the end.

Having resisted temptation, opposed error, endured affliction, and fought the good fight of faith, believers through the grace of Christ remain standing as conquerors.



## EPHESIANS 6:14

*"Stand therefore."*

The apostle now proceeds to describe the several parts of the Christian armour.

Believers are exhorted to:

*"stand,"*

that is, to hold firmly their ground, maintain their appointed station, persevere in the truth, and remain watchful against every assault of the enemy.

The first part of the armour is:

*"having your loins girt about with truth."*

The allusion is unto the military girdle worn by soldiers which bound together the garments and strengthened the body for conflict.

By:

*"truth"*

is chiefly intended the truth of the Gospel and the doctrines revealed in the Word of God.

Believers must keep these truths close unto them, firmly established in

mind and heart, never departing from them.

The truth of God strengthens the believer against Satan's assaults and preserves stability in spiritual conflict.

The apostle next adds:

*"and having on the breastplate of righteousness."*

This righteousness is not chiefly the believer's own works and obedience, though upright conduct does provide defence against reproach and accusation.

Rather the principal meaning is the righteousness of Christ imputed unto believers and received by faith.

This righteousness guards the soul against: the accusations of Satan, the terrors of conscience, and the condemnation of the law.

Clothed in Christ's righteousness the believer stands secure before God and protected in spiritual battle.

❦

**EPHESIANS 6:15**

*"And your feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace."*

The Gospel is called:

*"the gospel of peace"*

because it proclaims peace made with God through the blood of Christ.

It reveals reconciliation accomplished through the death of Christ and directs sinners unto everlasting peace with God.

The:

*"preparation"*

spoken of here signifies firmness, stability, and readiness founded upon the Gospel.

As shoes strengthen and protect the feet of a soldier in battle and march, so a firm understanding and assurance of the Gospel establishes believers in their Christian course.

Those who stand firmly grounded in the doctrines of grace are thereby enabled: to persevere steadily, to resist error, to endure affliction, and to continue faithful amidst spiritual conflict.

Thus believers are exhorted continually to stand fast in the Gospel of peace revealed through Jesus Christ.

❦

## EPHESIANS 6:16

*"Above all, taking the shield of faith."*

Faith is here compared unto a shield because of its great usefulness in spiritual warfare.

Whether understood of the grace of faith itself or chiefly of Christ and the promises embraced by faith, it serves as a mighty defence unto the believer.

Through faith the saints lay hold upon: the power of God, His faithfulness, His promises, the blood of Christ, His righteousness, and His redeeming grace. The apostle says:

*"above all,"*

not as though other parts of the armour were unnecessary, but because faith is especially useful in conjunction with them all.

Faith continually receives strength and supplies from Christ and opposes Him unto every temptation and accusation of Satan.

The apostle further adds:

*"wherewith ye shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked."*

The temptations of Satan are called:

*"fiery darts"*

because they: often come suddenly, pierce deeply, inflame sinful lusts,

trouble the conscience, and seek to set the soul on fire with unbelief, fear, pride, lust, anger, or despair.

Yet faith opposes the blood and righteousness of Christ unto every temptation and thereby extinguishes Satan's fiery assaults.

Thus through faith believers overcome the world, resist the devil, and persevere victoriously in Christ.

❦

## EPHESIANS 6:17

*"And take the helmet of salvation."*

The helmet protects the head in battle and therefore signifies that sure and well-grounded hope of salvation through Christ which guards the

believer's mind against discouragement, fear, and false doctrine.

This salvation is wholly founded upon Christ who is Himself the Author and Finisher of redemption.

The hope arising from His grace lifts up the believer's head in times of conflict, suffering, and temptation.

The apostle next adds:

*"and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God."*

The Word of God is compared unto a sword because of its sharpness, power, and efficacy.

Through the Scriptures: sin is exposed, error is refuted, Satan's temptations are resisted, conscience is pierced, and truth is defended.

This sword belongs unto:

*"the Spirit"*

because the Holy Spirit is its Author, teaches believers how rightly to use it, and renders it effectual through His power.

Thus Christ Himself overcame Satan in the wilderness by continual appeal unto the written Word of God.

❦

## EPHESIANS 6:18

*"Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit."*

Prayer is here added as the continual companion and support of all the believer's spiritual armour.

The apostle includes every kind of prayer: public and private, inward and outward, petitions, supplications, confessions, and thanksgivings.

Believers are exhorted to pray:

*"always,"*

not that they remain continually upon their knees, but that they maintain a continual spirit of dependence upon God and persevere diligently in prayer whenever opportunity is afforded.

Prayer is especially necessary in seasons of temptation, spiritual darkness, affliction, and conflict.

True prayer is performed:

*"in the Spirit."*

This signifies prayer offered sincerely from the heart under the gracious influence and assistance of the Holy Spirit.

The apostle further adds:

*"and watching thereunto."*

Believers must remain spiritually watchful: against temptation, against carelessness, against dependence upon outward forms, and for opportunities of prayer and thanksgiving.

They are likewise exhorted unto:

*"all perseverance."*

Prayer must not be abandoned because answers seem delayed or because difficulties arise.

The apostle concludes:

*"and supplication for all saints."*

Believers ought not merely to pray for themselves alone, but for all the people of God throughout every nation, condition, and place.

Thus the communion of saints is exercised through mutual prayer, love, and intercession before God.

## EPHESIANS 6:19

*"And for me, that utterance may be given unto me."*

The apostle here requests the prayers of the saints for himself, which demonstrates both his humility and his continual sense of dependence upon divine grace. Though he was an apostle extraordinarily called and furnished by Christ Himself, yet he still felt his need of fresh supplies of wisdom, strength, courage, and liberty in preaching the Gospel. This likewise teaches that ministers of the Gospel stand greatly in need of the prayers of the people of God.

The apostle desires:

*"that utterance may be given unto me."*

By this he means not the Gospel itself, for that had already been committed unto him, but rather liberty, wisdom, ability, and spiritual freedom in proclaiming it faithfully. He desired that words suitable and seasonable might continually be supplied unto him by the Holy Spirit.

The apostle further adds:

"that I may open my mouth boldly."

He sought courage and holy boldness in preaching the truth publicly and faithfully without fear of men. This boldness does not signify pride or fleshly confidence, but spiritual courage arising from faithfulness unto Christ and dependence upon divine strength.

The great design of this boldness was:

*"to make known the mystery of the Gospel."*

The Gospel is called:

*"a mystery"*

because its glorious truths could never have been discovered by natural reason apart from divine revelation. Such mysteries include the doctrine of the Trinity, the incarnation of Christ, redemption through His blood, justification by His righteousness, regeneration by the Spirit, union with Christ, and the eternal salvation of sinners wholly by grace. The apostle's duty was faithfully to proclaim, defend, and make known these divine truths unto both Jews and Gentiles alike.

**EPHESIANS 6:20**

**"For which I am an ambassador in bonds."**

The apostle describes himself as:

*"an ambassador"*

because he had been sent forth by Christ Himself to proclaim the Gospel in His name and stead. Ministers of the Gospel are ambassadors of Christ, entrusted with the message of reconciliation and peace through His blood.

The Gospel itself is an embassy of peace declaring that sinners by nature are enemies unto God, that peace has been made through Christ, and that reconciliation is freely proclaimed unto all who believe.

The apostle further adds:

*"in bonds."*

His imprisonment was not for evil conduct or civil crimes, but solely for the sake of Christ and the Gospel. Therefore he was not ashamed of his chains, but rather regarded them as honourable marks of faithfulness unto Christ.

His sufferings greatly confirmed the sincerity of his ministry and demonstrated the value he placed upon the Gospel which he preached.

The apostle again requests prayer:

*"that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak."*

Though imprisoned and opposed by many enemies, he desired liberty and courage faithfully to discharge his ministry without fear or compromise. A minister of Christ ought not to corrupt, conceal, or soften divine truth through fear of man, but should boldly and faithfully proclaim the whole counsel of God.



## EPHESIANS 6:21

*"But that ye also may know my affairs, and how I do."*

The apostle was careful that the churches should be informed concerning his condition and circumstances. This concern flowed from his affection toward them and his desire for their comfort and encouragement.

He therefore sent:

*"Tychicus."*

This faithful servant had accompanied the apostle in his labours and journeys and was well qualified to communicate accurately concerning the apostle's condition and ministry.

The apostle describes him as:

*"a beloved brother, and faithful minister in the Lord."*

He was:

*"a beloved brother"*

because he belonged unto the same spiritual family of God and was dearly loved both by the apostle and by the saints generally.

He was likewise:

*"a faithful minister"*

because he sincerely and diligently served Christ in the ministry of the Gospel. Faithfulness is among the highest and most honourable qualities belonging unto a servant of Christ.

The apostle therefore assures the Ephesians:

*"shall make known to you all things."*

They might confidently trust the report brought by Tychicus concerning the apostle's affairs and condition.

❦

## EPHESIANS 6:22

*"Whom I have sent unto you for the same purpose."*

The apostle again states the reason for sending Tychicus unto them. This reveals his continual concern for the welfare, comfort, and edification of the churches.

The purpose was:

*"that ye might know our affairs."*

The apostle desired that the believers should understand both his outward circumstances and the spiritual condition of those labouring with him in the Gospel. Such knowledge would strengthen their affection, encourage their prayers, and confirm them in steadfastness.

The apostle further adds:

*"and that he might comfort your hearts."*

Believers are often cast down through inward corruption, temptations of Satan, afflictions, persecutions, spiritual desertions, and concern for the sufferings of the saints.

Therefore ministers of Christ are appointed not merely to instruct but also to comfort the people of God. The Gospel itself is a message full of consolation, peace, hope, and encouragement unto weary souls. Thus Tychicus was sent both to inform and to comfort the Ephesian believers.

❦

## EPHESIANS 6:23

*"Peace be to the brethren."*

The apostle now concludes the epistle with his apostolical benediction.

By:

*"the brethren"*

he means the members of the church at Ephesus together with all true believers united in the household of faith.

The peace desired for them includes peace with God through Christ, peace of conscience, peace among the saints, and all spiritual and temporal wellbeing flowing from divine grace.

The apostle further adds:

"and love with faith."

These graces are closely joined together throughout the Christian life. Faith works by love, and true love flows from genuine faith in Christ.

Though believers already possess these graces, yet they continually require growth and increase in them because faith remains imperfect and love is often weakened through remaining corruption and worldly temptations.

The apostle declares these blessings to come:

*"from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."*

Thus both the Father and the Son are together presented as the common fountain of grace, peace, love, and faith unto the church. This clearly demonstrates both the distinction of Persons within the Godhead and the equality of Christ with the Father.



## EPHESIANS 6:24

*"Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity."*

Christ is the supreme object of Christian love. He is altogether lovely because of the glory of His Person, the excellency of His offices, the fulness of His grace, the perfection of His righteousness, and the greatness of His redeeming love toward His church.

Believers love Christ because He first loved them and gave Himself for them. This love manifests itself in delight in His presence, esteem for His Gospel, obedience unto His commands, affection toward His people, willingness to suffer for His sake, and continual desire after closer communion with Him.

The apostle further says:

*"in sincerity."*

True love unto Christ must be sincere, hearty, constant, and without hypocrisy. It must not consist merely in outward profession or verbal claims, but in genuine affection flowing from a renewed heart.

The apostle pronounces:

*"grace"*

upon all such sincere lovers of Christ.

This grace includes fresh discoveries of divine favour, renewed supplies of spiritual strength, perseverance in holiness, continued enjoyment of the Gospel, and ultimately everlasting glory.

The epistle therefore concludes with a gracious blessing resting upon all true believers who sincerely love the Lord Jesus Christ.

*"Amen."*

By this word the apostle confirms both his earnest desire and his assured confidence that these blessings shall indeed be granted unto the saints through the grace of God.

❦

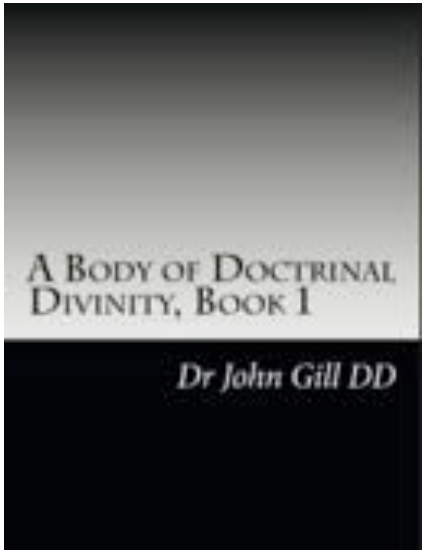
HYMN 339
PRAISE FOR REDEEMING LOVE
Augustus Montague Toplady
C.M.

1 A debtor to mercy alone,
Of covenant mercy I sing;
Nor fear, with Thy righteousness on,
My person and offering to bring.
2 The terrors of law and of God
With me can have nothing to do;
My Saviour's obedience and blood
Hide all my transgressions from view.
3 The work which His goodness began,
The arm of His strength will complete;
His promise is Yea and Amen,
And never was forfeited yet.
4 Things future, nor things that are now,
Nor all things below or above,
Can make Him His purpose forego,
Or sever my soul from His love.
5 My name from the palms of His hands
Eternity will not erase;
Impressed on His heart it remains,

In marks of indelible grace.
7 Yes, I to the end shall endure,
As sure as the earnest is given;
More happy, but not more secure,
The glorified spirits in heaven

**FURTHER PUBLICTIONS.**

**A BODY OF DOCTRINAL DIVINITY BOOK 1**



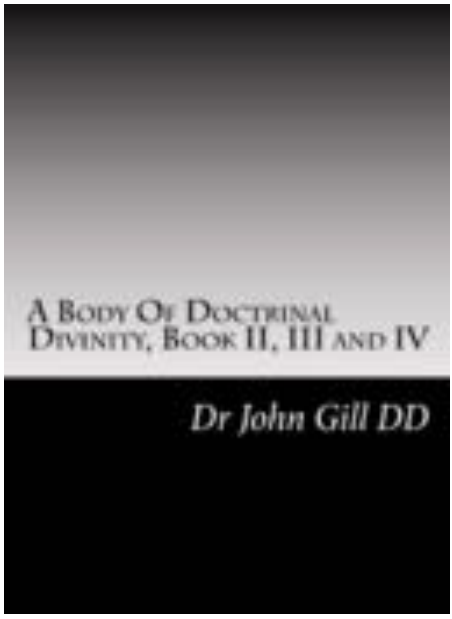

**A System of Practical Truths**

Authored by Dr John Gill DD, Created by David Clarke CertEd
8.5" x 11" (21.59 x 27.94 cm)
Black & White on White paper 176 pages
BISAC: Religion / Christian Theology / Systematic
THIS IS BOOK 1 Of The Seven Books Treating The Subjects:
Of God, His Works, Names, Nature, Perfections And Persons.
Contains:

1 Of The Being Of God
2 Of The Holy Scriptures
3 Of The Names Of God
4 Of The Nature Of God
5 Of The Attributes Of God In General, And Of His Immutability In Particular.
6 Of The Infinity Of God,
7 Of The Life Of God.
8 Of The Omnipotence Of God.
9 Of The Omniscience Of God.
10 Of The Wisdom Of God.
11 Of The Will Of God And The Sovereignty Of It
12 Of The Love Of God

13 Of The Grace Of God.
14 Of The Mercy Of God.
15 Of The Long suffering Of God.
16 Of The Goodness Of God.
17 Of The Anger And Wrath Of God.
18 Of The Hatred Of God.
19 Of The Joy Of God.
20 Of The Holiness Of God.
21 Of The Justice Or Righteousness Of God.
22 Of The Veracity Of God.
23 Of The Faithfulness Of God
24 Of The Sufficiency And Perfection Of God.
25 Of The Blessedness Of God.
26 Of The Unity Of God.
27 Of A Plurality In The Godhead, Or, A Trinity Of Persons In The Unity Of The Divine Essence.
28 Of The Personal Relations; Or, Relative Properties, Which Distinguish The Three Divine Persons In The Deity.
29 Of The Distinct Personality, And Deity Of The Father.
30 Of The Distinct Personality, And Deity Of The Son.
31 Of The Distinct Personality, And Deity Of The Holy Spirit.

**A BODY OF DOCTRINAL DIVINITY II, II,IV**




**A System Of Practical Truths**

Authored by Dr John Gill DD, Created by David Clarke Cert.Ed

**The contents of Book II treats the subject of Of The Acts and Works of God**

Chapters

I Of The Internal Acts And Works Of God; And Of His Decrees In General
2 Of The Special Decrees Of God, Relating To Rational Creatures, Angels, And Men; And Particularly Of Election.
3 Of The Decree Of Rejection, Of Some Angels, And Of Some Men.
4 Of The Eternal Union Of The Elect Of God Unto Him.
5 Of Other Eternal And Immanent Acts In God, Particularly Adoption And Justification.
6 Of The Everlasting Council Between The Three Divine Persons, Concerning The Salvation Of Men.
7 Of The Everlasting Covenant Of Grace, Between The Father, And The Son, And The Holy Spirit.
8 Of The Part Which The Father Takes In The Covenant.
9 Of The Part The Son Of God, The Second Person, Has Taken In The Covenant.
10 Of Christ, As The Covenant Head Of The Elect

11 Of Christ, The Mediator Of The Covenant
12 Of Christ, The Surety Of The Covenant.
13 Of Christ, The Testator Of The Covenant
14 Of The Concern The Spirit Of God Has In The Covenant Of Grace.
15 Of The Properties Of The Covenant Of Grace
16 Of The Complacency And Delight God Had In Himself, And The Divine Persons In Each Other, Before Any Creature Was Brought Into Being.

**Book III treats the subjects Of The External Works Of God.**

Chapter
1 Of Creation In General
2 Of The Creation Of Angels
3 Of The Creation Of Man
4 Of The Providence Of God
5 Of The Confirmation Of The Elect Angels, And The Fall Of The Non-Elect.
6 Of The Honour And Happiness Of Man In A State Of Innocency.
7 Of The Law Given To Adam, And The Covenant Made With Him In His State Of Innocence; In Which He Was The Federal Head And Representative Of His Posterity.
8 Of The Sin And Fall Of Our First Parents.
9 Of The Nature, Aggravations, And Sad Effects Of The Sin Of Man.
10 Of The Imputation Of Adam's Sin To All His Posterity
11 Of The Of The Corruption Of Human Nature.
12 Of Actual Sins And Transgressions.
13 Of The Punishment Of Sin

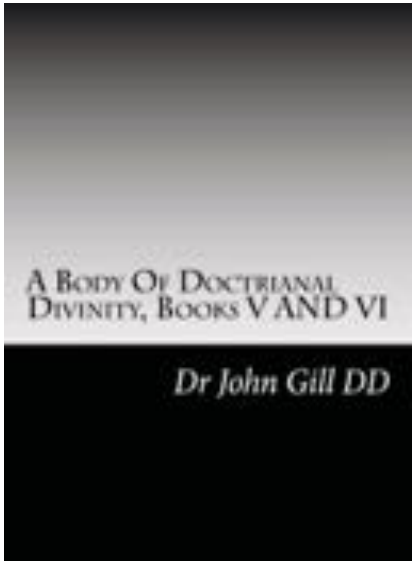
**Contents Book IV.**

Of The Acts Of The Grace Of God Towards And Upon His Elect In Time
Chapter
1 Of The Manifestation And Administration Of The Covenant Of Grace
2 Of The Exhibitions Of The Covenant Of Grace In The Patriarchal State
3 Of The Exhibitions Of The Covenant Of Grace Under The Mosaic Dispensation
4 Of The Covenant Of Grace, As Exhibited In The Times Of David, And The Succeeding Prophets, To The Coming Of Christ
5 Of The Abrogation Of The Old Covenant, Or First Administration Of It, And The Introduction Of The New, Or Second Administration Of It.
6 Of The Law Of God
7 Of The Gospel

**Table of Contents Book V**

INTRODUCTION
1 Of The Incarnation Of Christ
2 Of Christ's State Of Humiliation
3 Of The Active Obedience Of Christ In His State Of Humiliation
4 Of The Passive Obedience Of Christ, Or Of His Sufferings And Death
5 Of The Burial Of Christ
6 Of The Resurrection Of Christ From The Dead.
7 Of The Ascension Of Christ To Heaven
8 Of The Session Of Christ At The Right Hand Of God
9 Of The Prophetic Office Of Christ
10 Of The Priestly Office Of Christ
11 Of The Intercession Of Christ
12 Of Christ's Blessing His People As A Priest
13 Of The Kingly Office Of Christ
14 Of The Spiritual Reign Of Christ

## A BODY OF DOCTRINAL DIVINITY, V, VI




**A System OF Practical Truths**

**Book V**

Of The Grace Of Christ In His State Of Humiliation And Exaltation, And In The Offices Exercised By Him In Them.

Chapter
1 Of The Incarnation Of Christ
2 Of Christ's State Of Humiliation
3 Of The Active Obedience Of Christ In His State Of Humiliation.

4 Of The Passive Obedience Of Christ, Or Of His Sufferings And Death.
5 Of The Burial Of Christ.
6 Of The Resurrection Of Christ From The Dead.
7 Of The Ascension Of Christ To Heaven.
8 Of The Session Of Christ At The Right Hand Of God.
9 Of The Prophetic Office Of Christ.
10 Of The Priestly Office Of Christ.
11 Of The Intercession Of Christ
12 Of Christ's Blessing His People As A Priest
13 Of The Kingly Office Of Christ
14 Of The Spiritual Reign Of Christ

**Book VI**

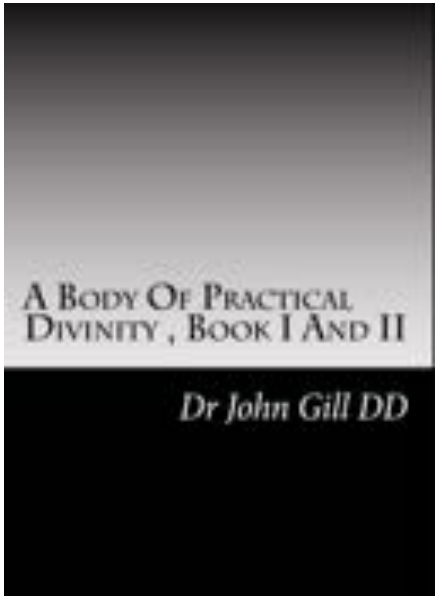
Chapter
1 Of Redemption By Christ
2 Of The Causes Of Redemption By Christ
3 Of The Objects Of Redemption By Christ
4 Of Those Texts Of Scripture Which Seem To Favour Universal Redemption
5 Of The Satisfaction Of Christ
6 Of Propitiation, Atonement, And Reconciliation, As Ascribed To Christ
7 Of The Pardon Of Sin
8 Of Justification
9 Of Adoption
10 Of The Liberty Of The Sons Of God
11 Of Regeneration
12 Of Effectual Calling
13 Of Conversion
14 Of Sanctification
15 Of The Perseverance Of The Saints

BOOK VII

Chapter
1 Of The Death Of The Body
2 Of The Immortality Of The Soul
3 Of The Separate State Of The Soul Until The Resurrection, And Its Employment In That State
4 Of The Resurrection Of The Body
5 Of The Second Coming Of Christ, And His Personal Appearance
6 of Of The Conflagration Of The Universe
7 Of The New Heavens And Earth,And The Inhabitants Of Them.

8 Of The Millennium Or Personal Reign Of Christ With The Saints On The New Earth A Thousand Years
9 Of The Last And General Judgment
10 Of The Final State Of The Wicked In Hell
11 Of The Final State Of The Saints In Heaven

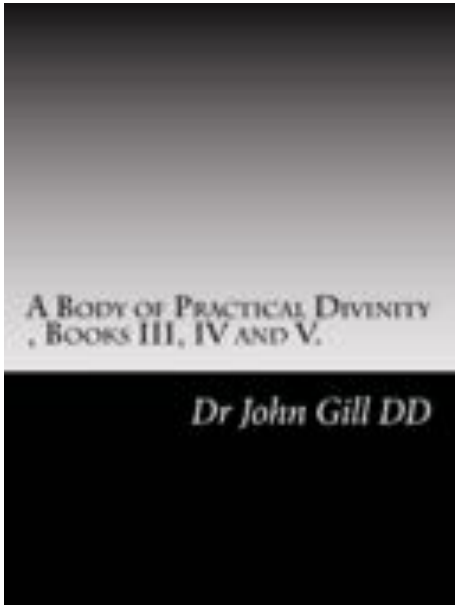
## A BODY OF PRACTICAL DIVINITY , BOOK I, II




**A System of Practical Truths**

Authored by Dr John Gill DD,
Created by David Clarke Cert.Ed
ISBN-13: 978-1545542088 (CreateSpace-Assigned)
ISBN-10: 1545542082
BISAC: Religion / Christian Theology / Systematic
This reproduction of Dr John Gill's Body of Divinity is book I and II of Practical Divinity of total of IV books.
**Contents** Book I
Chapter
I Of The Object Of Worship
2 Of Internal Worship; And Of Godliness The Groundwork Of It.
3 Of The Knowledge Of God
4 Of Repentance Towards God
5 Of The Fear Of God
6 Of Faith In God And In Christ

7 Of Trust And Confidence In God
8 Of The Grace Of Hope
9 Of The Grace Of Love
10 Of Spiritual Joy
11 Of Peace And Tranquility Of Mind
12 Of Contentment Of Mind
13 Of Thankfulness To God
14 Of Humility
15 Of Self-Denial
16 Of Resignation To The Will Of God
17 Of Patience
18 Of Christian Fortitude
19 Of Zeal
20 Of Wisdom Or Prudence
21 Of Godly Sincerity
22 Of Spiritual Mindedness
23 Of A Good Conscience
24 Of Communion With God
**Book II Of External Worship, As Public**
Chapter
1 Of The Nature Of A Gospel Church, The Seat Of Public Worship
2 Of The Duties Of The Member Of A Church To Each Other
3 Of The Officers Of A Church, Particularly Pastors
4 Of The Duties Of Members Of Churches To Their Pastors
5 Of The Office Of Deacons
6 Of The Discipline Of A Church Of Christ




**A System of Practical Truths**

Authored by Dr John Gill DD, Created by David Clarke Cert.Ed
ISBN-13: 978-1546846659 (CreateSpace-Assigned)
ISBN-10: 1546846654
BISAC: Religion / Christian Theology / Systematic

**Book III**

Of The Public Ordinances Of Divine Worship

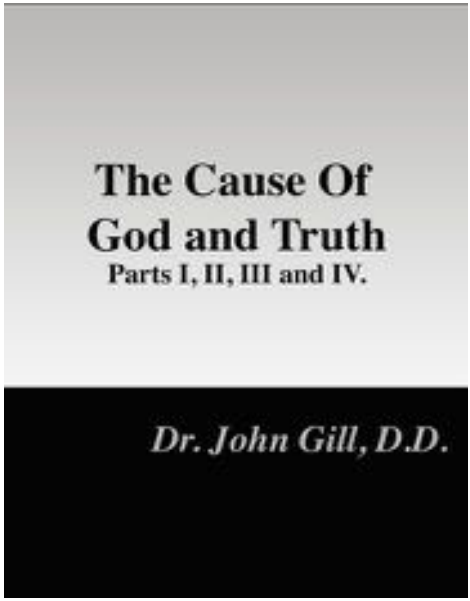
Chapter
1 Of Baptism
2 Of The Lord's Supper
3 Of The Public Ministry Of The Word
4 Of Public Hearing The Work
5 Of Public Prayer
6 Of The Lord's Prayer
7 Of Singing Psalms, As A Part Of Public Worship
8 Of The Circumstances Of Public Worship, As To Place And Time Of Private Worship, Or Various Duties, Domestic, Civil, And Moral

**Book IV**

Chapter
1 Of The Respective Duties Of Husband And Wife
2 Of The Respective Duties Of Parents And Children

3 Of The Respective Duties Of Masters And Servants.
4 Of The Respective Duties Of Magistrates And Subjects
5 Of Good Works In General
6 A Compendium Or Summary Of The Decalogue Or Ten Commands
**Book V**
**Chapter**
1 A Dissertation Concerning The Baptism Of Jewish Proselytes Of The Various Sorts Of Proselytes Among The Jews
2 The Occasion Of This Dissertation
3 The Proof Of The Baptism Of Jewish Proselytes Inquired Into; Whether There Is Any Proof Of It Before, At, Or Quickly After The Times Of John And Christ.
4 The Proof Of This Custom Only From The Talmuds And Talmudical Writers
5 The Reasons Why Christian Baptism Is Not Founded On And Taken From, The Pretended Jewish Baptism Of Israelites And Proselytes

**THE CAUSE OF GOD AND TRUTH, PART 1,II, III,IV**




Authored by Dr John Gill DD, Created by David Clarke CertEd

## ABOUT THIS EDITION

The Cause of God and Truth is John Gill's classic defence of the Doctrines

of Grace and one of the most comprehensive responses ever written to the Arminian theology of Dr Daniel Whitby.

Originally published in four parts between 1735 and 1738, this monumental work was undertaken after Gill repeatedly heard the challenge: "Why do not ye answer Dr Whitby?" Whitby's Discourse on the Five Points had become widely regarded as the definitive argument against Calvinistic theology. Gill therefore set himself the task of examining Whitby's arguments and testing them by the authority of Holy Scripture.

In Part One, Gill carefully examines the principal passages of Scripture commonly cited in support of universal redemption, free will, and general grace, offering detailed expositions and answering objections raised against the doctrines of sovereign grace. In Part Two, he defends the biblical doctrines of Election, Reprobation, Particular Redemption, Efficacious Grace, Human Depravity, and the Perseverance of the Saints, demonstrating their foundation in the Word of God.

Part Three addresses the philosophical and rational arguments advanced against Calvinism, showing that the doctrines of grace are not contrary to sound reason, while maintaining the supreme authority of divine revelation. Particular attention is given to the doctrines of God's foreknowledge, providence, the freedom of the will, and the spiritual condition of the heathen nations.

Part Four examines the testimony of the early Christian writers before Augustine, demonstrating that the essential doctrines of sovereign grace were not innovations of the Reformation but were recognised within the ancient church. Gill also addresses objections relating to predestination, redemption, original sin, efficacious grace, perseverance, and the case of the heathen.

Throughout this work Gill argues that the great doctrines of salvation by grace alone are firmly rooted in Scripture and form an essential part of the Christian faith. Written with exceptional scholarship, careful exegesis, and pastoral conviction, The Cause of God and Truth remains one of the most important defences of historic Reformed theology ever published.

This edition brings together all four original parts in a single volume, preserving Gill's arguments for a new generation of readers while providing a valuable resource for ministers, students, and all who seek a deeper understanding of the sovereign grace of God in salvation.

## LET CHRISTIAN MEN BE MEN

David Clarke

Originally published as *The Bierton Crisis (1984)*, this deeply personal and theological account traces the journey of David Clarke—minister, church secretary, and committed member of the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist Church, a historic Gospel Standard cause founded in 1832.

This book documents a significant crisis that shook the foundation of the Bierton Church in 1984. As doctrinal errors and questionable practices crept into the fellowship, David stood firm in proclaiming the doctrines of grace—particularly Particular Redemption—and affirmed that the gospel of Christ, not the Law of Moses, is the believer's rule of life. His stance led to a withdrawal of fellowship, yet the church never terminated his membership, desiring his return.

David's testimony not only exposes the theological and ecclesiastical struggles within the church but also chronicles the unexpected closure of the Bierton chapel in 2002, while he was engaged in gospel mission work in the Philippines. Upon returning to the UK, he discovered that a new, unelected group of trustees had taken control of the chapel, denied his rightful membership, and ultimately sold the historic building as a domestic property in 2006.

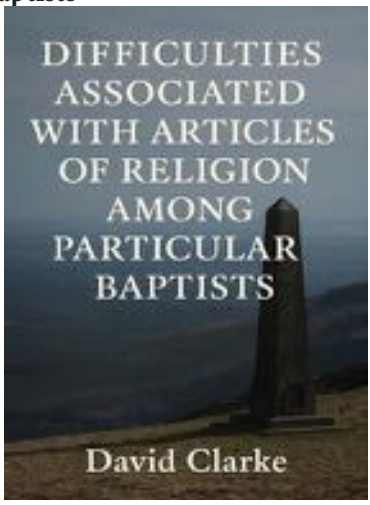
This book is both a warning and a call: a warning against doctrinal

compromise and a call for ministers and believers to ground their faith and practice in Scripture alone—not tradition, not personal opinion, and not the fear of man.

*Let Christian Men Be Men* is an appeal to return to biblical conviction, gospel clarity, and godly courage—so that men may truly stand, teach, and live as Christ's ambassadors in an age of confusion.

## DIFFICULTIES ASSOCIATED WITH ARTICLES OF RELIGION

**Among Particular Baptists**




David Clarke

This book has been written for those who find themselves troubled, confused, or even discouraged by the Articles of Religion—or Confessions of Faith—that are often required for church membership among Particular Baptists.

Throughout church history, believers have sought to express their shared understanding of the faith through creeds and confessions. While such documents can be helpful in clarifying doctrine, they can also become stumbling blocks when their language is unclear, their assertions go beyond Scripture, or when they demand an advanced theological understanding that many sincere believers may not yet possess. This is especially true for those new to the faith or those whose consciences are bound by the Word of God alone.

Drawing on personal experience, the author highlights the challenges faced when joining a Particular Baptist church, particularly in regard to conflicting or historically ambiguous articles of faith. The events

surrounding the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptist Church in the late 20th century serve as a case study—demonstrating the real pastoral and theological difficulties that can arise when church membership is restricted by confessions that are misunderstood, misapplied, or internally inconsistent.

Yet this book is not a rejection of Articles of Religion altogether. On the contrary, it affirms their importance when rightly used. The aim is not to cast off doctrinal clarity, but to call for honesty, humility, and scriptural fidelity in how churches apply such confessions. The book offers a comparison of four historical Baptist confessions, discusses controversial additions, and explores how such documents should function in the life of a church governed by grace and truth.

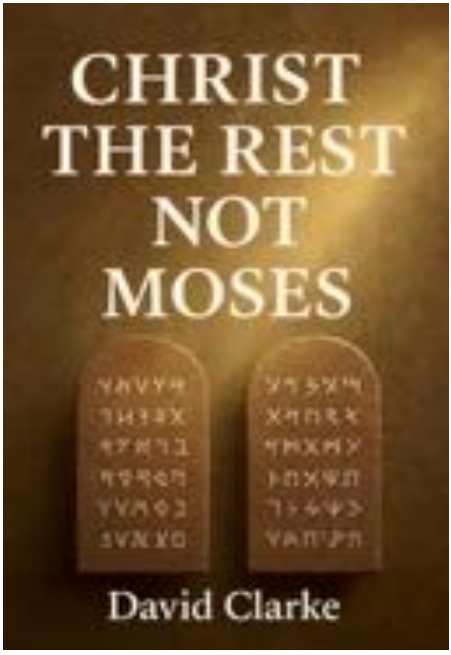
May this book serve as a helpful guide to those who, with a sincere desire to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, wrestle with the tensions between confessional loyalty and biblical conviction. Let it also be a call to church leaders to handle such matters with care, patience, and a deep understanding of the Gospel of Christ.

**Isaiah 52:8 Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion.**

Contents

Articles of Religion Important
Authors Testimony
Bierton Particular Baptist Church
A Difficulty Over Articles Of Religion
Bierton Particular Baptists History
1 First London Particular Baptists Confession 1646, 2nd Edition
The Development of Articles Of Religion,Act of Toleration
Additions That Are Wrong
2 London Baptist Confession 1689 1
Notes on The London Baptists Confession1689
3 Bierton Particular Baptists Articles of Religion, 1831
Difficulties Over Articles of Religion
Notes on Bierton Particular Baptists 1831
4 The Gospel Standard Articles of Religion 1878
Observations of the Gospel Standard Articles of religion
Letter to Mr Role's of Luton Added Articles
My comments Article 32
The Difficulties Of these Articles Proved
Serious Doctrinal Errors Held

## CHRIST THE REST, NOT MOSES




By David Clarke
*Author of Converted on LSD Trip*

*"Let us labour therefore… to enter into that rest."* – Hebrews 4:11

What is the true rest promised to the people of God? Is it found in observing days and laws — or in Christ Himself?

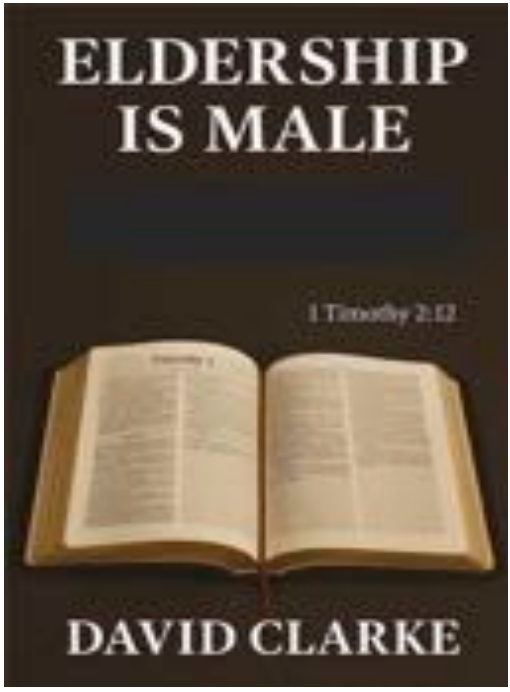
In this bold and thought-provoking work, David Clarke draws from Scripture and personal experience to confront a foundational issue at the heart of Christian doctrine: justification by faith alone.

Clarke, once rejected by a Gospel Standard minister over his understanding of Hebrews 4, writes not to stir controversy, but to call believers back to the simplicity and power of the gospel. With a serious tone, pastoral heart, and unwavering conviction, he urges readers to turn from legalism and shadows to the finished work of Christ.

Written especially for those who love the doctrines of grace, yet feel isolated or misunderstood, this book is a call to clarity, courage, and

confidence in the rest that is found in Christ — and Christ alone.
This is not merely a theological issue. It is a matter of liberty, peace, and the very ground of our standing before God.

## ELDERSHIP IS MALE




Does the Lord Jesus Christ Want Women to Rule as Elders in His Church?

In a world increasingly shaped by cultural shifts and ideological pressure, the Church is not immune to confusion regarding gender roles and spiritual authority. In Eldership Is Male, David Clarke takes a bold, scriptural stand on one of the most controversial issues confronting the Church today: should women serve as elders?

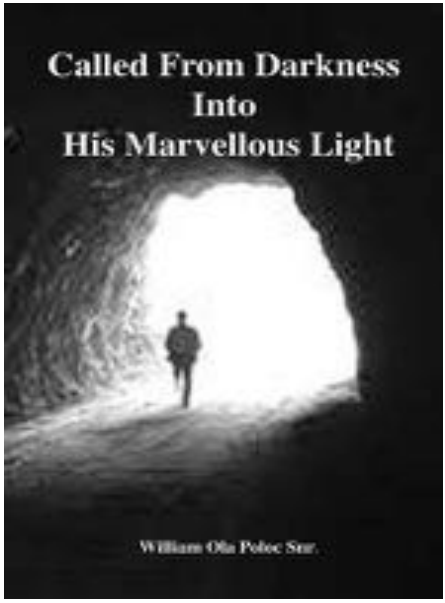
Originally sparked by a real-life confrontation within his local church, Clarke documents his personal journey, correspondence, and theological reflections surrounding the attempt to appoint women as elders—an act he believes directly contradicts biblical teaching. Drawing from Scripture, historical context, and his own experiences, the author lays out a clear, uncompromising case for male eldership as designed by God and established by Christ through His apostles.

The alternative subtitle, Only a Woman Can Be Pregnant, serves as a

provocative reminder of biological and biblical distinctions—truths increasingly denied or dismissed in both society and the Church.

This book is a clarion call for Christians to return to the authority of God's Word, resist the tide of modern compromise, and faithfully uphold the doctrines delivered once to the saints.

## CALLED FROM DARKNESS INTO HIS MARVELLOUS LIGHT




*William Poloc*

William Poloc was once an inmate of New Bilibid Prison in the Philippines, having been sentenced to 14 years for the crime of homicide. Yet it was during his time in prison that the Lord Jesus Christ called him to repentance and faith. Turning his back on a life of sin, William began to read the Holy Scriptures and study theology. In time, he came to understand and embrace the doctrines of grace, and he was soon teaching the gospel to his fellow inmates.

I first met William in October 2001 while visiting New Bilibid Prison, where I was serving as Director of the Christian mission, Trojan Horse International.

Upon his release in August 2002, William was commissioned by Trojan Horse International and sent back to his home city of Baguio to preach the gospel to the inmates of Baguio City Jail and Benguet Provincial Jail.

In October 2002, I travelled to Baguio City Jail in my capacity as Mission

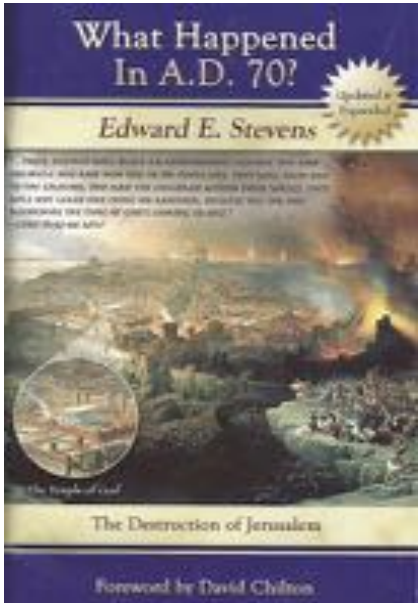
Director and as a sent minister of the Bierton Strict and Particular Baptists. There, I had the privilege of baptising 22 inmates who had been truly converted—from crime to Christ—through the ministry of William Poloc. I also baptised a further 8 souls at Benguet Provincial Jail who likewise testified of salvation by grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. These remarkable events coincided with the final worship service ever held at the Bierton Strict Baptist Chapel in the United Kingdom, which took place on 22nd December 2002.

Over the past two decades, Brother William has faithfully laboured in the gospel ministry. As his testimony shows, he has continued to preach and teach the Word of God, and has established what is now known as the Baguio Christ-Centred Churches.

We give thanks to Almighty God for His wondrous works in the salvation of sinners, and for raising up faithful men like William Poloc, who proclaim the message that "Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners" (1 Timothy 1:15, KJV).

David Clarke
Director, Trojan Horse International
April 2022

## WHAT HAPPENED IN A.D. 70




Ed. Stevens

This book introduces a view of Bible prophecy which many have found

extremely helpful in their Bible study. It explains the end time riddles which have always bothered students of Bible prophecy. It is a ***consistent view*** which makes the book of Revelation much easier to understand. It establishes when the New Testament canon of scripture was completed, demolishes the liberal attack on the inspiration of the New Testament, and is more ***conservative*** on most other issues than traditional views. And there is ***no compromise*** of any essential Biblical doctrine of the Christian faith.

The key to understand any passage of scripture has always been a good grasp of the historical setting in which it was originally written {***audience relevance***). Two thousand yeas from now our history, culture, politics and language will have changed dramatically. Imagine someone then having to learn the ancient language of "American English" to read our USA newspapers! If they saw one of our political cartoons with a donkey and elephant, what would they think? How would they go about understanding it? Not only would they have to study the language, but also our culture, history, politics and economics. The same applies to Bible study. If we are really going to understand what all the "donkeys and elephants" (beasts, harlots, dragons, etc.) Symbolize in the book of Revelation, we will have to seriously and carefully study the language, history, culture and politics of the First Century. Of course, the truths essential for salvation are couched in simple language that everyone can grasp. But there are numerous scriptures in the Bible which are "hard to understand" (cf. 2 Pet 3:16), and Bible prophecy is one of those things which must be approached with much more focus on the original historical art cultural context (audience relevance)

One of the main purposes of this book is to provide a closer look at the historical framework behind the New Testament. Many have found it helpful to lay aside (at least temporarily) the legion of speculative opinions about the book of Revelation, and look at a more historical alternative, which is that ***the book of Revelation was written to the first century church and had primary relevance to them.*** It warned of events that were about to happen in their lifetime, and prepared them for the tribulation and other events associated with the End of the Jewish Age.

Atheists, skeptics, Jew, Muslims, and liberal critics of the bible use the supposed failure of those end times events to occur in the First Century to undermine the integrity of Christs and the inspired NT
writings.

Non-Christian Jews laugh at this supposed non-occurrence, and use it as evidence that Jesus is not the Messiah. Their forefathers in the

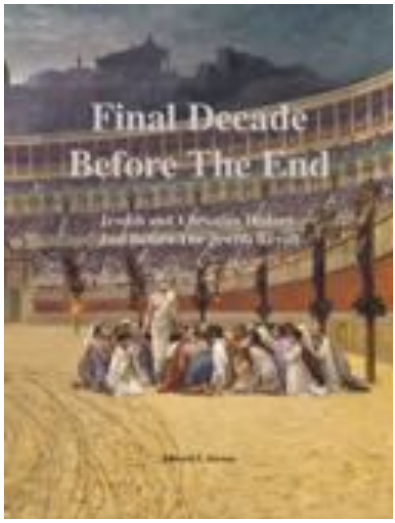
flesh rejected Jesus in His first coming because He did not fulfill the Old Testament prophecies in the materialistic and nationalistic way that they were expecting, even though Jesus told them that His Kingdom was not of this world, and that it would be within them instead. Yet it seems that many futurists today are expecting that same kind of materialistic and nationalistic kingdom to arrive at a future return of Christ Are they making the same mistake about the Second Coming that the Jews made about His first coming? Jesus repeatedly said His Kingdom is "not of this world" and that it would "not come with observation." It is a spiritual entity, and it has arrived We live in it. Both futurist Christians and non-Christian Jews need to realize this.

Christians are finally beginning to seek alternatives to the fatally flawed ***futurist*** interpretation. This book introduces the Preterist view.

"Preterist" simply means past in fulfillment It means that Christ has already fulfilled His promise to return and consummate redemption in Himself and His ongoing spiritual kingdom (the church). We should be like the noble-minded Bereans and "search the scriptures daily to see whether these things are true" You might want to have your Bible open alongside as you read

April 17,2010

## FINAL DECADE BEFORE THE END




**Ed. Stevens**

Ever since the booklet, **What Happened In AD 70?** was published in 1980,

there have been constant requests for more detailed information about the Destruction of Jerusalem and the Jewish, Roman, and Christian history associated with it. Over the years since then I have studied Josephus, Yosippon, Hegesippus, Tacitus, Suetonius, Eusebius, the Talmud, Midrash, Zohar, Pseudepigrapha, Church Fathers, Apocrypha, Dead Sea Scrolls and other Jewish/Christian writings, trying to determine exactly what happened, when it happened, and the effect it had upon the Church.

Then in 2002, after I began to promote J. S. Russell's view of a literal rapture, the demand for historical documentation of the fulfillment of all eschatological events dramatically increased. That forced me to dig much deeper. So in 2007 I put together a 21-page chronology of first century events. Two years later in 2009, we published a more substantial 73-page manuscript entitled, First Century Events in Chronological Order. That helped fill the void, but it did not go far enough. It only increased the appetite for a more detailed and documented historical reconstruction of first century events.

The book of Acts does not give a lot of details about the other Roman and Jewish events that were happening while Paul was on his various missionary journeys. For those events, we have to go to the other contemporary Jewish and Roman historians such as Josephus and Tacitus. The closer we get to AD 70, the more important all of those Jewish and Roman events become. They form an important backdrop behind the Christian events and show how all the predictions made by Jesus were literally fulfilled. Every High Priest and Zealot leader that we encounter from AD 52 onwards are directly connected with the events of the Last Days. Things are heating up, not only for the Christians, but also for the Jews and the Romans.

Paul on his missionary journeys was clearly following a plan which was providentially arranged for him by Christ: (1) to plant new churches among all nations and not just Jews, (2) appoint elders and deacons in every church (Acts 14:23; 1 Cor. 4:17), (3) write inspired epistles to guide them, (4) instruct his fellow workers to "teach these things to faithful men who would be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2), and (5) establish the Gentiles in the Church and make them one united body with the Jews (Eph 4). Everywhere Paul went, he followed this pattern. We see this clearly as we study the historical narrative in Acts and Paul's other epistles that were written during this time. These are essential patterns that the apostles evidently bound upon both Gentile and Jewish Christians, and which were intended to be the pattern for all future generations of the eternal Church (Eph 3:21; 2Tim 2:2).

We begin our study by looking at the most likely dates for Matthew (AD 31-38) and Mark (AD 38- 44), and then proceed to the first three epistles of Paul (Galatians, 1 & 2 Thessalonians), which were written on his second missionary journey (AD 51-53). Including these five books in our study allows us to date all twenty-seven books of our New Testament, and show how the NT canon was formed and completed before the outbreak of the Jewish War in AD 66. The study of New Testament canonization in itself is a good reason for reading this work, without even looking at the historical fulfillment of all of the end-time prophecies that we document here.

After looking at the dates for those first five books, we then move on into the third missionary journey of Apostle Paul which began in AD 54. It was during this final dozen years (from AD 54 until AD 66) when the birth pangs and signs of the end started increasing in both intensity and frequency, along with a quickening pace of NT books being written. We show how 19 of our 27 NT books (70 percent) were written during those last five years just before the Neronic persecution (AD 60-64). The Great Commission was finished, and the rest of the end-time events predicted in the Olivet Discourse were fulfilled during that time of "tribulation" upon the church and the "days of vengeance" upon the unbelieving Jews (Luke 21:22).

Edward E. Stevens
INTERNATIONAL PRETERIST ASSOCIATION
Bradford, Pennsylvania
April 17,2010